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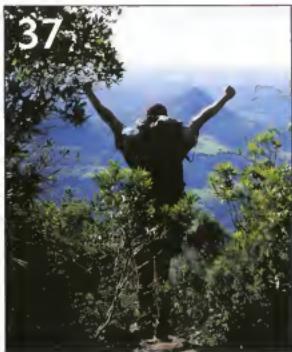
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HH
HELLY HANSEN

After the fires

Damage from some of the worst bushfires since the arrival of Europeans in Australia goes far beyond a burnt and blackened landscape

FOR MUCH OF JANUARY AND FEBRUARY WE followed media reports with horror as they recounted how unchecked bushfires swept through the High Country of south-east Australia. Town after town was threatened, livestock and property destroyed—but, miraculously, very few human lives were lost. Not the least concerned were bushwalkers, ski tourers and conservationists, for whom the Australian Alps with their unique mountain forests have particular significance. Burning simultaneously on several fronts, the fires showed no respect for National Park, or even State, boundaries. Indeed, some of the most extensive damage was in three National Parks dear to many of the people referred to above: Victoria's Alpine National Park, Kosciuszko in New South Wales, and Namadgi in NSW and the Australian Capital Territory. The Victorian National Parks Association reported that in Victoria alone 1.3 million hectares were burnt. A detailed summary of the extent of the fires and the destruction they wrought appears on page 15.

Well before the last fire was out, the predictable cries of scapegoats and economic opportunists had reached a crescendo in the 'popular press'. Talk-back radio reverberated with shrill country voices denouncing 'urban greenies', parks management, and authorities in general for being the cause of the fires in the first place, and then for the fires doing so much damage once they got away. Government received a second helping for giving fire-affected communities too little, too late, and braced for the inevitable round of litigation seeking further compensation at the taxpayer's expense.

Not surprisingly, the logging industry and farming lobby are at the forefront of these claims. According to them, greenies and bureaucrats have caused forests to be 'locked away'—left as vast tinder-boxes just waiting to explode into flame at the first lightning strike and burst out into the towns and farms of the 'rural battlers'. If only loggers had been allowed open slather in felling the offending forests and if large-scale grazing had been permitted on alpine plains there'd be a rural utopia of jobs for all and reduced fire hazard! Whatever forest was left after such public-spirited land management practices should have been subjected to rigorous, extensive and regular 'fuel-reduction burning' by forest management agencies which, the argument goes, is only 'natural' and was done by the Aborigines for thousands of years as firestick burning.

The facts are rather different. The notorious Black Friday fires of 1939 burnt more than 1.6 million hectares in Victoria (almost a quarter more than was burnt this year). A subsequent Royal Commission found that large-

scale grazing, burn-offs and logging had, in fact, contributed to the severity and extent of the fires. And in those days, there wasn't a greenie in sight!

Fuel-reduction (prescribed) burning has been conducted for years by land managers, without opposition from conservationists. However, such burns frequently get out of control,

touched forests enclose cool, damp microclimates in which ferns and mosses thrive and which act as fire-retardant barriers. To burn such forests only encourages the growth of drier, fire-adapted plants.

Friends of the Earth Australia has pointed out that the sort of environmental conditions that made this year's fires so disastrous are



This view of the iconic Victorian peak Mt Feathertop from Mt Hotham shows the extent of fire damage in the region, including on the popular ridge between these peaks, the Razorback. Stephen Curtin

and the extreme dryness in recent years has made them use more dangerous and hence less common. And the way we have cleared, opened up and drained the bush has significantly increased the prospect of 'controlled burns' becoming 'uncontrolled burns'. It seems likely that Aboriginal firestick burning was not extensive, confined mainly to grass- and heathlands, and was relatively uncommon in forested regions.

As the autumn issue of the *Potoroo Review* points out, most fires are started by *humans, outside parks*. There is no difference in fire control and suppression on private land, National Parks or State forest. The combination of drought conditions, extreme temperatures and high winds caused the latest fires to be so severe and extensive. Rather than assisting the protection of such places from fire, cattle in natural alpine areas favour native grasses, thus encouraging the growth of low shrubs and other more flammable vegetation growth in its place. Similarly, clear-fell logging is not the salvation of our forests from the ravages of fire. Unlike untouched forests, which generally exhibit significant diversity of age, storeys and species, clear-fell regrowth tends to be thick, uniform and oily—perfect for fire. Un-

fortunately those anticipated under climate change, and quotes the CSIRO as saying that the incidence of wildfire is expected to increase with global warming. If this is the case, FOE argues, it could impact on cooler-climate species and lead to fire-adapted species replacing the present forest found at middle and higher altitudes, including mountain ash and snow gum. Rather than despair, FOE concludes that we should therefore see this year's fires as 'a wake-up call for dealing with climatic change'.

It may be tempting to 'kick the environmental dog' in response to the widespread pain and loss occasioned by this year's disastrous bushfires, but it is not helpful. Indeed, the 'dog' has a responsibility to bite back. If it fails to do so the cost could be enormous. At stake are hard-won gains in the way we manage our natural resources and these have been achieved only after decades of effort and amassing scientific evidence. Instead, it could leave the door open for those who would pounce at the opportunity to rape our forests in the guise of saving them from fire, and could mean that nothing is done to deal with the real causes of even worse fires in the future.

Chris Baxter



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Nothing more than censorship

Regulating photography in the bush

WILD IS QUITE RIGHT TO DESCRIBE THE New South Wales National Parks & Wildlife Service Regulation 2002 as it pertains to 'commercial' photography as being both alarming and draconian (*Wild* no 87, page 17). Unfortunately, the NSW NPWS is not the only government instrumentality to have introduced such bizarre, undemocratic measures into the realms of regulation.

Since July 2000 under a series of measures laughingly referred to as the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) regulations, the Federal Government has the power to fine people who either take or publish the 'wrong' kind of picture of Uluru or Kata Tjuta.

The EPBC regulations are ostensibly to protect the culture of Anangu, the traditional owners of the Rock; however, what has never been explained satisfactorily is how the taking of photographs or their publication is damaging to the Anangu culture. What particularly annoys many of Australia's best landscape photographers is that several of the areas from which they have been excluded can be clearly seen by all visitors to the park and indeed by all Anangu as they move about the National Park. The EPBC regulations are nothing more than censorship.

Equally frustrating for landscape photographers is the situation in Queensland's National Parks. According to Lesley Anderson, the current Permits Coordinator, the letter of the law states that any photograph that is published should have been taken with a permit. Theoretically, a photographer could be fined if a published photograph was taken without a permit. While the permits themselves aren't really that expensive (\$21.60 a day), the fact that people are meant to pay for this 'privilege' before they can get an image in print strikes at the very notion of 'free speech' and its accompanying corollary of freedom of visual expression.

Lastly, I could not help but notice the unintended irony of the article about photographic licences appearing on the same page as the obituary for the American photographer Galen Rowell. In the USA the situation for landscape photographers is vastly different from that which their Australian counterparts face. In the USA, the rights of professional photographers are protected by L-A-W, namely Public Law 106-206, which states that 'the Secretary (of the Department of the Interior) shall not require a permit nor assess a fee for still photography on lands administered by the Secretary if such photography takes place where members of the public are generally allowed'.

It was because he was able to take photographs in America's National Parks without bureaucratic hindrance that Galen Rowell

was able to hone his craft and become a master of 'participatory photography' through his landscape images, as Grant Dixon has aptly noted. Sadly, the policies now being implemented by the federal park service and at State level in the park services of NSW, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria, work against those dedicated photographers who attempt to achieve their creative best in our wonderful National Parks. And ultimately the park policies work against all of us when we are denied the best product of a photographer's labour.

Ross Barnett
(by email)



A load of it

I would like to take a slightly alternative view to that expressed in the Editorial in *Wild* no 88. The reason National Parks services spend a fortune is not always to protect idiots from themselves or the environment, but to protect the environment from the idiots. Actually, they probably aren't all idiots although their sheer numbers overwhelm parks. In many cases these people aren't really seeking a 'get out amongst it' wilderness experience but are often content with a good view, a short loop track and a photo opportunity. (Often the reason people travel is to get that quintessential photo, like the ones that have been marketed in travel agencies and glossy pamphlets.)

I support some of the developments at easily accessible places within National Parks to protect the ecology. What I don't support is the tendency for these developments to evolve into five-star accommodation. This can sensibly be kept out of the park like at Cradle Mountain, Tasmania, although recently Cradle Village has begun to grow like a cancer! At Lake St Clair, at the other end

of the park, and at Maria Island and Cockle Creek inappropriate developments are mooted which should be quashed. My attitude is that people can just as easily go for a day-trip, take the camera, get their photo and go home or possibly stay in some quaint town nearby. There are heaps of struggling B&Bs which would love some patronage. People don't need fancy linen to enjoy the wilderness! Likewise they do not need the expensive wine and boutique food, all of which has to be disposed of by National Parks services once these people have processed it.

Yes, these developments are a load of shit both before and afterwards.

Stephen Bunton
(by email)

Don't ring us...

On a recent walk in the Mother Woila area of Deua National Park, New South Wales, I noticed with interest that the Mother Woila fire track had been freshly cleared and that a new track has been added. The new track leaves the Woila fire track 800 metres south of Dampier Trig, following a ridge in an easterly direction for about 300 metres.

Curious as to why a bulldozer had bludgeoned an innocent ridge, I phoned Narooma National Parks & Wildlife office for an answer. I was told the area manager will return my call in a couple of weeks when he returns from leave. The receptionist speculated that tracks had been maintained because of the fires that had been in the area earlier this year (no sign of fires in the Mother Woila area) but had no knowledge of any new tracks.

Andrew Powell
Curtin, ACT

More on snow-caves

Harley Wright's excellent article (*Wild* no 87) on the tragic deaths of the four snowboarders in August 1999 sheds interesting light on the possible cause of death and provides a salutary reminder of some of the lesser-known risks in the snow country. Having extensively climbed, skied and camped in the Kosciuszko National Park as well as many other major mountain ranges of the world for well over 27 years, including many nights spent in igloos, snow-caves and tents, I can attest to the risk of suffocation. Australian snow in particular tends to have a higher moisture content and greater density, making it less porous. Along with relatively 'warmer' ambient air temperatures, this creates a particularly dangerous combination. On a number of occasions in Australia my com-



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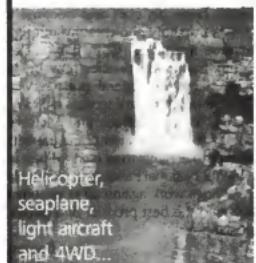
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panions or I have woken up during the night barely able to breathe due to foul air. On one occasion our snow-cave had slumped to half its height in less than 12 hours, almost burying us as we slept. A Royal Marine Commando on exchange in Australia some years ago assisting me on a military snow-survival course informed me that it was standard procedure in the British services to maintain all-night candle vigils due to a high incidence of death and near misses in snow-caves in the UK. Harley Wright's tips to safeguard against snow-cave suffocation are a timely reminder for all snow-cavers on how to minimise this lesser-known risk.

Zac Zaharias
(by email)

I read with much interest the report in *Wild* no 87 about the snowboarders tragedy. Harley Wright has certainly put a lot of myths to rest and given constructive suggestions to help people caught in extreme snow conditions. However, there are a few points which deserve clarification.

As a caver for over 30 years, I am well aware of the signs and symptoms of 'foul air' which contains greater than 0.5 per cent carbon dioxide (CO_2) and less than 18 per cent oxygen (O_2)...

In deep limestone caves I have experienced and measured foul air with 6.5 per cent CO_2 and less than 13 per cent O_2 . At this point my heart was racing and breathing was extremely laboured and I had an incredible headache. From researching medical literature I have found that CO_2 becomes a sedative after about 7 per cent CO_2 . If the level continues to rise, senses are numbed, causing sleepiness, coma and death.

A snow-cave with the entrance completely blocked will breathe to some extent through the snow particles, but if the cave interior becomes iced over the atmosphere becomes totally trapped. At this point all O_2 used by human respiration will increase the cave atmosphere by almost an equivalent quantity of CO_2 . A simple test of an atmosphere is to ignite a cigarette lighter or match. When a naked flame will just not stay alight the atmosphere contains less than 15 per cent O_2 and about 5 per cent CO_2 . A person's breathing and heart rate are racing at this stage, but there is still a reasonable time left to excavate a hole from all but very deeply buried caves. Bearing in mind that the warning signs of headaches, dizziness, reduced energy, increased heart and breathing rate would have been evident for a few hours leading up to this point.

Essentially if a match or cigarette lighter won't ignite, or a candle won't stay alight, it is the danger period when the cave entrance must be unblocked. It is not a panic situation and a calm approach is essential to start excavating an air hole to the surface. Bearing in mind that in good air a human exhales air containing 15–16.3 per cent O_2 and about 4.5 per cent CO_2 and this is sufficient to revive a person using Expired Air Resuscitation (EAR). In a trapped cave atmosphere it is the elevated CO_2 concen-

tration which is the real danger to humans, well before the reduced O_2 becomes a problem.

It is important to construct a snow-cave into a reasonably sloping surface and keep a ski or stock inside for punching a hole through to the surface.

Garry Smith
(by email)

Brian a nom de plume for Quentin?

Over the past 20 years or so I have purchased all but the first five or six issues of *Wild*. I love the publication, but I'm sorry I'm not on your mailing list. It's just one of those things. I wish your magazine came out monthly...

Two comments: Quentin Chester's articles are wonderful. Quite often I refer to them when people ask why I go bushwalking or skiing. He has such a way with words. It would be great if he was in every issue as I miss his words of wisdom.

Secondly, a bit tongue-in-cheek; in your recent bushwalking-boot survey there was no mention of the Dunlop Volleys, which appear in photos of walkers in *Wild*. No, I have never worn them as I don't think they would be sturdy enough, but I think their price is more friendly than that of some boots...

Brian McKay
(by email)

A more complete record

I was flicking through some of the old editions of *Wild* on Australia Day and came across the autumn 2001 edition (no 80) which included an article by Zac Zaharias titled 'High Achievers', outlining the Himalayan exploits of Australians since 1994.

Included in the list was the Kerdennath Expedition of 1999 with an asterisk denoting insufficient information. For this record, this expedition was led by Glen Sharrock and the members were Steve Turner, Chris Thompson, Chris McGrath, Chris McElvey and Lester Joyce.

The aim was to complete Kerdennath as an acclimatisation for the Bonington route on Shivaling...

From high camp on Kerdennath, the first summit team of Chris McElvey, Chris Thompson and Glenn Sharrock set out on 16 September, only to abandon the attempt some nine hours later due to deep snow. A second team of Chris McGrath and Steve Turner set out early on 17 September but again were beaten back by soft snow and bad weather. On 18 September a final attempt by Chris McGrath and Chris McElvey was blessed with a very clear day. The pair successfully summited about 11 am...

The proposed route on Shivaling proved to be very unstable and we cleared Advanced Base on 23 September.

I hope this adds to a more complete record in Zac's excellent article!

Lester Joyce
(by email)

Cooking on gas

Airlines are becoming more aware of the potential dangers of liquid-fuel stoves on planes as I recently discovered on a trip to New Zealand. On the way over I asked the Qantas check-in person if there were any restrictions on fuel bottles and was told there weren't. On the way back, however, I had to unpack my rucksack in front of an impatient queue of passengers in order to find the empty bottles and wrap them in plastic and an absorbent cloth. For Qantas flights from New Zealand, fuel bottles now have to be dried out for a couple of days, then sealed in plastic with their caps off, and finally enclosed in a towel or something similar. You must then sign a declaration stating that you have done all this. Next time *Wild* does a stove survey you might like to point out that Shellite stoves have this drawback. As far as I'm concerned, gas is now the preferred option for overseas trips to countries where one can buy the stuff.

John L'Ons
(by email)

The lightweight pot stand for Trangia stoves shown in my Trix in *Wild* no 88 suffers from excess sooty of the cooking pot. I subsequently removed the bottom section and drilled holes around the top piece of pipe. This had the effect of increasing boil times slightly but, more significantly, it reduced sooty to very low levels.

A picture of the improved design is available on the Web: <http://members.ozemail.com.au/~mdunk/anthony/lightmethstove.html>

Anthony Dunk
(by email)

Get the picture?

...Recently below Mt Anne, Tasmania, I met briefly with a threesome... I noticed as we sat and shared a lunch that they were using film canisters to store salt and pepper... this is not a good idea. Photographic film contains a range of unhealthy chemicals which are known to be harmful, toxic and possibly carcinogenic; these chemicals can leach out of the film and into the plastic container, then into any food that is stored in the container...

Andy Cianchi
(by email)

Supportive

I think that your gear surveys are fine.

One aspect of the surveys I find invaluable is the country of manufacture of the products under review. As far as is practicable, I buy products of Australia or New Zealand—thereby supporting the local economy.

Kent Wilson
(by email)

Readers' letters are welcome (with sender's full name and address for verification). A selection will be published in this column. Letters of less than 200 words are more likely to be printed. Write to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic, 3181 or email wild@wild.com.au

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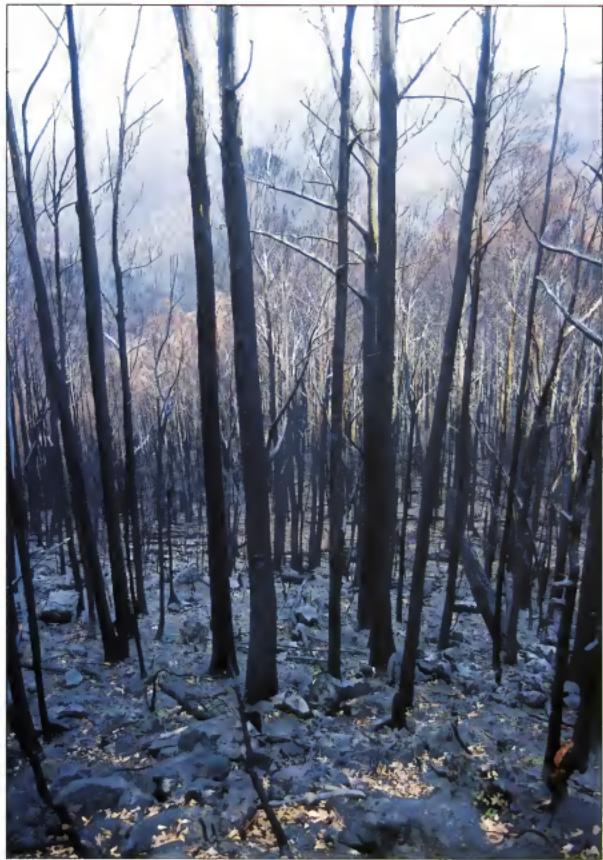
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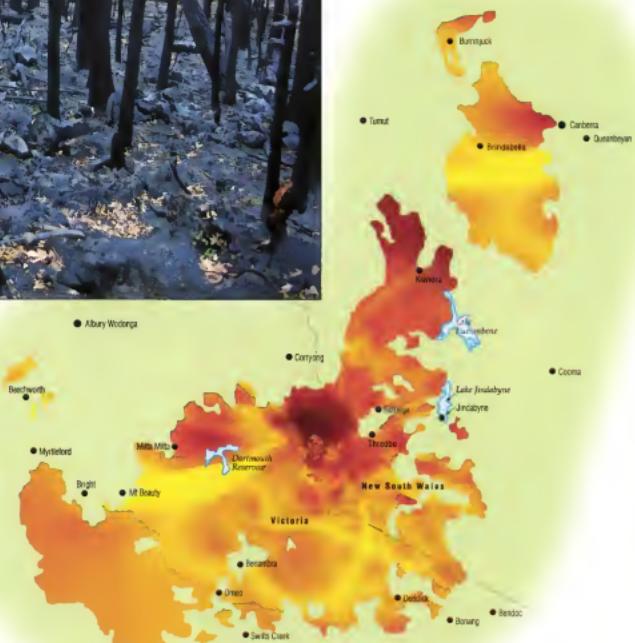
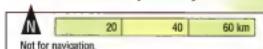


Decimated alpine ash forest in the

East Kiewa River valley, Victoria.

Stephen Curtin

The extent of the fires



The bushfires that were raging out of control and were described in *Info in Wild* no 88 eventually destroyed more than two million hectares of native forest in the Australian Alps before being brought under control. The resulting damage is immense, with burnt-out areas covering up to 67 per cent of Kosciuszko National Park, New South Wales, and 95 per cent of Namadgi National Park, in the Australian Capital Territory. A large extent of Victoria was also burnt including areas in the Mt Buffalo National Park, Alpine National Park and Wabba Wilderness Park. In Victoria alone, approximately 1.3 million hectares were burnt, compared to the 1.6 million hectares destroyed in the notorious 1939 fires.

Many roads, camp-sites and parks were closed due to fire damage or extreme fire risk. Some areas and facilities will remain closed until late in the year because of concerns about visitor safety as well as potential erosion and other environmental damage. Sections of the Alpine and Namadgi National Parks are not expected to open until spring at the earliest.

More huts were lost in these fires than have been burnt in the last 30 years. More than 40 huts were destroyed, with many more damaged. This number may well in-



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Huts destroyed

Victoria

Battys Hut, New Country Spur, north of Mt Nelse
Bogong Creek Hut, head of Bogong Creek, west of Mt Bogong
Bon Accord Hut, Bon Accord Spur, north of Mt Hotham
Briggs Logging Camp Hut, West Kiewa River, west of Mt Fainter
Buckwong Hut
Burnside Hut, Burnside Track, off Knocker Track
Charlie Creek Hut, Davies Plain Track, Charles Creek
Damm Hut, previous site of Howards Hut
Dr Searles Hut, Gibbo River junction
Dunstans logging huts, Mt Pinnibar, just off Dunstans logging road
Eucu Stephenson's Hut, Nine Mile Creek, off Eight Mile Loop
Federation Hut, Bungalow Spur, west of Mt Featherthorpe
Horsehair Hut, on the Alpine Road at Horsehair Plain
Huggins Hut, Buckety Plain, south of Middle Creek
Long Plain Hut, Limestone, south of Dead Horse Creek
McFarlane Flat Hut, MacFarlane Flat
McNamara's Hut, Buckety Plain, north of Bunderah River
Michell Hut, Eskdale Spur, north of Mt Bogong
Mt Leinster Hut, Mt Leinster
Mussurie Hut, near Pluto Creek, Gibbo River junction
O'Rourkes Hut, Tom Groggin Station
Quintet Mine Huts, Quintet Mine, south of Mt Loch
Red Hut, Roper Saddle
Red Robin Mine Hut, Machinery Spur
Rocky Plain Hut, on Black Mountain Run
Roney Macs Hut, Reedy Creek in the Darbalary
Ropers Hut, Duane Spur
Springs Saddle Hut, Mt Fainter

NSW

(All are in Kosciuszko National Park)

Boltons Hill Hut
Boobee Hut
Brooks Hut
Delany's Hut
Derschkosz Hut
Geehi Hut
Happy Jacks Huts 3 and 4
Kidmans Hut
O'Keeffes Hut
Olsens Lookout Hut
Old Geehi Hut/YHA
Opera House Hut
Orange/Diane Hut
Patons Hut
Pretty Plain Hut
Stockwhip Hut
Verandah Camp Hut

ACT

(All are in Namadgi National Park)

Mt Franklin Chalet
Slalom Hut
Tennent Homestead

crease as areas are opened. Refer to the separate box for details of the huts lost.

In Victoria, the Falls Creek based Community Fire Association created a containment line around Wallaces Hut to provide a buffer from the bushfire. This worked and the historical hut survived, as did nearby Cope Hut. Not so lucky was Horsehair Hut. Omeo region historian Dianne Caroll said:

only three or four individuals. Areas of Kosciuszko National Park containing populations of corroboree frogs and mountain pygmy possums were also burnt. Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, ACT, was destroyed and most of the animals killed.

The Australian bush is famous for its resilience and many trees and bushes had new green shoots within days of being burnt.



Delany's Hut, the Snowy Mountains, New South Wales, was one of scores of huts consumed in the fires. Harry Hill

This was the oldest hut in the Victorian High Country region, being over 130 years old, and all the news said was that the air-port was okay, just lost a couple of old sheds.'

The effects of the fires on wildlife were catastrophic. Fires in East Gippsland may have seriously damaged the survival chances of the endangered brush-tailed rock wallabies. Two colonies were in this region, each with

The fires should not prevent people from exploring the National Parks, provided they are open, as the burnt areas have their own beauty and fascination. However, it will take years, even decades, for the Alps to recover and the long term effects of the fire to be assessed.

Stephen Curtain, Scott Edwards, Harry Hill and Glenn van der Knijff

Stoves welcome on board

Since 1 January liquid fuel stoves have been allowed on IATA airlines. Air New Zealand and Qantas have details of this policy change on their Web sites.

The Qantas rule is: 'Camping stoves and fuel containers that have carried a flammable liquid fuel may be carried provided the tank of the camping stove and/or fuel container has been completely drained of all liquid fuel and action has been taken to nullify the danger.'

Air New Zealand provides more information, including a PDF copy of a standard form for passengers to sign which describes the procedure. The stove or bottle must be placed into checked baggage (not hand luggage), the tank must be drained for one hour or flushed with vegetable cooking oil—depending on the type of stove—then air dried for at least

six hours. It must be wrapped with absorbent material (such as paper towels or clothing) and placed in a plastic bag sealed with an elastic band or equivalent.

Which method you use will depend on your stove type. Stoves with separate fuel bottles such as MSR WhisperLite are ideal for the air-drying method. I empty all fuel and pour boiling water into the bottle, then empty that out. This speeds up the drying process, particularly in damp weather, as the hot bottle aids evaporation. For stoves with integrated fuel storage such as Coleman Peak, the use of cooking oil is the best method—while it causes some surging on next use it does not harm the stove.

No carry method has been approved for gas canisters and these are still banned.

John Chapman

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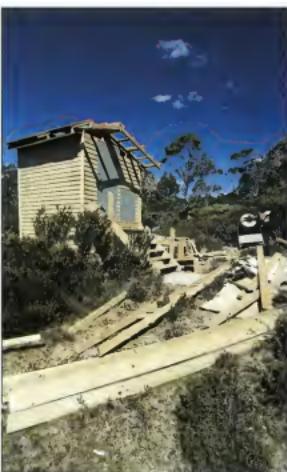


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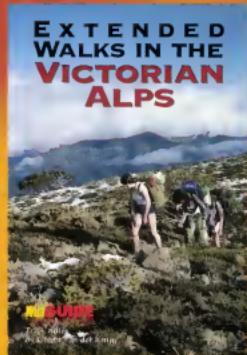
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Walls gets new loo



Composting toilet under construction in Tasmania's Walls of Jerusalem.
John Chapman

A new toilet and a large number of tent platforms have been built in Tasmania's popular Walls of Jerusalem National Park. They are on the slope above Wild Dog Creek, below Herods Gate. Walkers are encouraged to use these facilities rather than camp in the valley of Lake Salome.



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Tasmanian bushwalking information

During the summer there is a full-time Bushwalking Information Officer employed at the Hobart office of the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service. Advice, information and a large range of maps for planning are available from a person with firsthand experience of Tasmania's major walking areas. Current information about track conditions, closures, water-supplies and other logistical matters is also provided. Phone (03) 6233 6191 between 1 December and Easter each year. Help may be available on this number outside the summer months.

On a different note, a reshuffle at the TPWS has left rangers blue. Their standard brown uniforms have been replaced by grey, leading to rangers being mistaken for parking inspectors!

Cross-country ski events

In January Australian skiers had their best ever results at the Junior World Cross-country Championships. Victorian skier Esther Bottomley came 21st in the sprints, whilst Ben Sims from NSW placed 26th in the 30 kilometre race. The Championships were held at Solleftea in Sweden.

Falls Creek, Victoria, will be treated to successive weekends of cross-country action in late August with the combined Australian Junior and Senior Championships on 23–24 August, followed a week later by the Kangaroo Hoppet. This is the Southern hemisphere's largest international snow-

sports event, attracting more than 1200 skiers from around the world. It is the opening event of the 2003–04 World Hoppet series in which more than 80 000 skiers participate in 14 events across four continents.

Allan Marsland

Under fire

Some canyons in the Blue Mountains have been closed to allow burnt-out areas to regenerate after last summer's bushfires. This includes canyons off the Mt Hay road, canyons near Bungleboon Creek in the Wolangambe area, and those close to Galah Mountain. Canyons east of Newnes and Glen Davis are also closed. It is to be hoped the

areas will be reopened for next summer's canyoning season.

David Noble

SCROGGIN

✚ The **cease-fire** called between the Maoist rebels and the Government in **Nepal** has been helped by a directive issued by Maoist supremo Prachanda on 16 February. It called for the end of extortion and 'coercive' donations from both international tourists and the Nepalese.

✚ Stephen Bunton reports that France's **Gouffre Mirolida** is the new **deepest cave** on earth, with a depth of 1733 metres, after a French/Italian expedition dived past a sump to reveal more passage and yet another sump.

✚ Australian **Warren MacDonald** and Tanzanian-born Hamisi Lugonda reached the summit of Uhuru Peak, **Kilimanjaro** (5895 metres), Tanzania, on 19 February after 18 days on the mountain. MacDonald, an above-the-knee double-leg amputee, described the climb with Lugonda, who was born without arms, as his most difficult so far.

✚ We've received an unconfirmed report that summer bushfires got into a stand of **Wollemi pines** in the Blue Mountains, NSW. Apparently an Erickson Sky Crane was deployed to Lithgow to deal with the situation.

✚ A guided walk through the **Macquarie Marshes**, an internationally recognised wetland in western NSW, is scheduled for 4–5 October. Bookings can be made with NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service on (02) 6824 2089.

✚ Perhaps the first of many 'schools in the bush', Geelong Grammar's **Timbertop** near Mt Buller, Victoria, is celebrating its **50th** anniversary. Past students and teachers include Prince Charles, Victoria's Governor John Landy, Tim Macartney-Snape and other, more shadowy, figures. In March some 1200 'old Timbertopians' gathered in Melbourne for a dinner to mark the occasion—a talkfest of unprecedented magnitude in Australian bush-related events? ☺



Wild Diary listings provide information about rucksack-sports events and instruction courses run by non-commercial organisations. Send items for publication to the Managing Editor, Wild, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181. Email wild@wild.com.au

July

19	Big River Rapid Sprint Championships C	Vic	www.canoevic.org.au
20	Tarwin Lower Marathon Race C	Vic	www.canoevic.org.au
26	NSW Senior/Junior 2.5/5.10 km Championships S	NSW	(02) 4271 7848
27	Rocky Valley Rush/Sun Valley Ramble S	Vic	(02) 6024 5896
27	ACT Senior/Junior 2.5/5.10 km Championships S	NSW	0409 914 032

August

2	Hotham to Dinner Plain S	Vic	(03) 9998 0136
2-3	Avon Descent M	WA	(08) 9333 8200
3	Geelong Marathon Race 7 C	Vic	www.canoevic.org.au
4	King River White-water Race C	Vic	www.canoevic.org.au
9-10	9-10 SA Championships R	SA	(08) 8271 2712
9-10	Spring 24 hr R	WA	(08) 9342 9213
10	Vic/500 10 km Championships C	Vic	www.canoevic.org.au
10	5 hr Metropaine R	ACT	(02) 6251 6908
10	Bullight Charge S	Vic	(03) 5772 2195
13	Kosciuszko Alpine Club Cross-country Classic S	NSW	(02) 9389 7671
16	Australian/Masters 15/30 km Championships S	NSW	(02) 6299 9641
16	Snowy Mountains Classic S	NSW	(02) 6299 9641
16	5 hr Snogaine R	Vic	(03) 9438 6626
17	Jumping Creek to Warrandyte C	Vic	www.canoevic.org.au
17	Sale Marathon Race 8 C	Vic	www.canoevic.org.au
23	6/12 hr R	NSW	(02) 9990 3480
23-24	Australian Senior/Masters/Junior 2.5/5.10 km Championships S	Vic	(03) 5754 1101
30	Kangaroo Hoppet, Birkebeiner and Joey Hoppet S	Vic	(03) 5754 1045
31	Footscray Marathon Race 9 C	Vic	www.canoevic.org.au

September

6	Charles Derrick Memorial S	Vic	(03) 5721 6322
13	Victorian Schools Downriver Race C	Vic	www.canoevic.org.au
13	6/12 hr R	Vic	(03) 9438 6626
13	6 hr R	Old	(07) 4033 0906

Activities: B bushwalking, C canoeing, M multisports, R rogaining, S skiing. Rogaining events are organised by the State rogaining associations

October

13-14	Victorian Marathon Championships C	Vic	www.canoevic.org.au
13-14	6 triveling 15 hr/24 hr Old Championships R	Old	(07) 5497 9261
20-21	Bendigo Cup Sprint/ Marathon C	Vic	www.canoevic.org.au
28	Footscray/Ted Pace Marathon C	Vic	www.canoevic.org.au

November

1	Goulburn Marathon Classic C	Vic	www.canoevic.org.au
8	12 hr (Handicap) Challenge R	Vic	(03) 9438 6626
8-9	Hawkesbury Canoe Classic C	NSW	(02) 9666 7786
8-9	8 hr Upside-down R	Old	(07) 5497 9261
9	Bridge to Bridge Marathon C	Vic	www.canoevic.org.au
9	Metropaine R	Old	(07) 2862 7721
25	Barwon Mini-marathon C	Vic	www.canoevic.org.au
26	Adventure Series Race M	NSW	www.adventureseries.com.au

Corrections and amplifications

Mole Creek was misspelt in 'The walk at a glance' box on page 51, in the Track Notes in *Wild* no 88. Two people require 450 g (565 ml) of methylated spirits for a weekend trip (not 230 g (330 ml) as mentioned on page 65 of *Wild* no 88).

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos (on CD, not by email) or colour slides, are welcome. Typed items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email wild@wild.com.au

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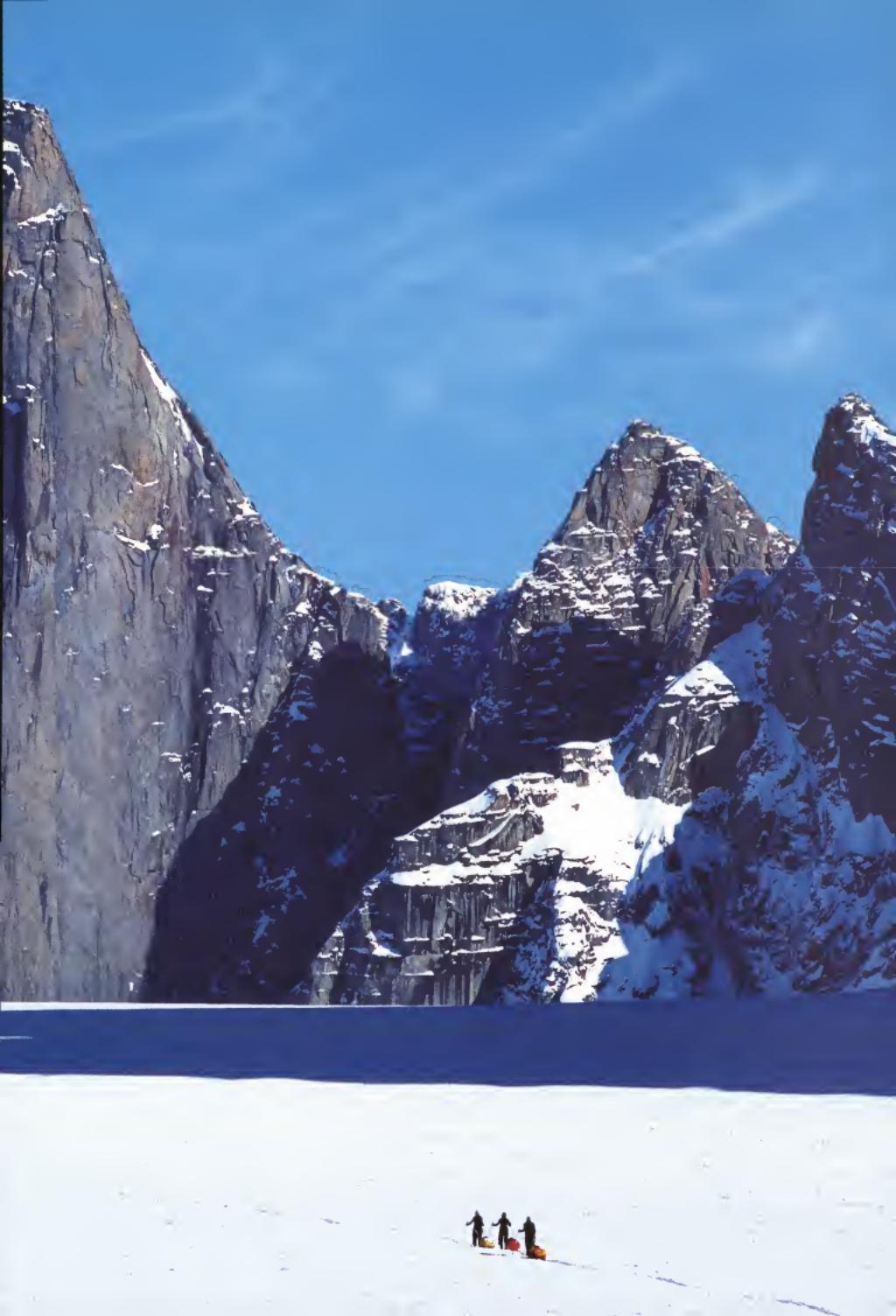
**Baffin Island by ski,
by Grant Dixon**

A VISIT TO THE ARCTIC HAD BEEN ON MY wish list for some time, but the opportunity to join a four-week trip to Baffin Island with Tasmanian friend Sarah and Canadians Greg, Louise, Trish and Vivian came quite late, after my plans for another trip fell through. The best experiences often follow from the unexpected, so I set about getting equipment together and handed over lots of dollars to the travel agent (Arctic travel is expensive!).

Baffin Island, is more than 1500 kilometres long and is the largest of Canada's Arctic islands. It forms part of Canada's newest province, Nunavut ('our land' in the Inuktitut language). This sparsely populated two million square kilometre territory came into being on 1 April 1999, the culmination of 20 years of Inuit land-claim negotiations.



*Mt Asgard looms over the pass
at the head of the Turner Glacier.
All photos Grant Dixon*



Despite much pretrip organisation having been taken care of by locals Greg and Louise, the plan of getting organised in a couple of days and having time for some skiing in the Rockies before flying north—which Sarah and I had concocted during our transpacific flight—remained just a dream. Anticipation can sometimes make the pretrip tasks—shopping, sorting, weighing and packing—seem less boring, but after four days the attraction was wearing thin. Sarah and I grabbed things from the shelves at a supermarket with gay abandon. Later we found that we had more than 40 kilograms of food each for the planned 30 days so it was back to the drawing-board. Gradually the food and gear strewn about in Greg and Louise's home was organised and packed for both the long flights north and subsequent stowage in the sleds. Items like cheese, margarine and bagels (very tasty for the first week!) were presliced because they would freeze solid in the Arctic cold.

An unplanned and, as it turned out, unnecessary development was Sarah's need to re-equip almost completely a few days before flying north because a rucksack was mislaid by Air Canada. After much begging and borrowing, the missing bag turned up at the last minute.

The hiccups did not end there. Delays at Edmonton airport the morning of our flight gave us time to ponder our seemingly huge pile of baggage while overnight snowfall was ploughed from the runways and plane wings were de-iced. Airlines have different rules about excess, oversize and overweight baggage, so we juggled some 20 items at check-in (including an overweight 1.8 metre packed sled) in an attempt to minimise the extra charges.

Then Louise, travelling on a different flight, missed her connection in Yellowknife due to delays caused by the snow. However, another delay enabled her to catch up with us.

Baffin Island



days later. The rest of us spent this time stranded in Igloolik, Nunavut's capital and largest town (population 4500), a sprawling mixture of modern, insulated buildings and wooden shacks.

Eventually we were all together again, setting up camp on the sea-ice adjacent to Qikiqtaaluk. An Inuit settlement for 1000 years, this village now has a population of about 500, much growth occurring in the 1950s with the construction of a nearby Cold-War-era distant early warning (DEW) station by the US Air Force. North of the Arctic Circle and more than 3000 kilometres from the shops and scenes of the sometimes frenetic pretrip, we were ringed by curious village children as we prepared our first meal and watched the light change on a distant iceberg.

Auyuittuq National Park, 'the land that never melts', was set aside in 1972 to become the first National Park north of the

Arctic Circle. The park covers 19 500 square kilometres of glacial valleys, fiords and dramatic mountain peaks on Baffin Island's Cumberland Peninsula. The wilds of Auyuittuq were to be our home for the subsequent few weeks. Our plan was to cross the park by major glaciers and ice-caps, exploring some of the tributary glaciers and perhaps climbing a few peaks, before descending to South Pangnirtung Fiord by the frozen Weasel River valley—a total distance of some 260 kilometres with side trips.

Qikiqtaaluk is on 16 kilometre long Broughton Island, just off the coast and surrounded by sea-ice. We were here at this time of year, early spring, as it was after the dark and very cold days of winter but before the sea- and river-ice broke up under the onslaught of summer's 24-hour sunshine. The Coronation Glacier, our route to the Penny Ice-cap in the heart of Auyuittuq National Park, lay more than 70 kilometres across the sea-ice and up a long fiord. We had decided to avoid this long plod and minimise the potential for encounters with polar bears by using snowmobiles to take us to the start of our trek at the terminus glacier.

Snowmobiles have replaced dog sleds in many parts of Nunavut today although a few dog teams remain as nostalgic reminders of a traditional lifestyle and are used for transport and tourism in some places. We helped two local Inuit men tie our laden sleds on to two *qamutiks* (long, wooden sleds that were to be towed by the snowmobiles), wedged ourselves amongst the loads as comfortably as possible and then roared off. Travelling in this way was fast and efficient for our pur-

poses but certainly not comfortable. We were bashed and jarred continuously, the *qamutiks* often becoming airborne as we hurtled over pressure ridges and snow hummocks on the sea-ice. The wind-chill created by travelling at up to 40 kilometres an hour through the -20°C air forced us to don every item of clothing we had, leaving us looking like characters out of an old Michelin tyre advertisement.

We were too busy hanging on to look around, with the periodic stops to stretch and have a break from the battering being our only opportunities to take in the surroundings. And they were stunning—the sun, shining in a clear, blue sky, glistened off small, crystal icebergs frozen in the flat expanse of sea-ice, which ended abruptly at the sheer walls of Coronation Fiord.

Approaching the ice-cliff terminus of the Coronation Glacier, we crossed a line of polar-bear tracks on the sea-ice, apparently

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We climbed steadily up the glacier—which is more than 40 kilometres long and up to three kilometres wide—over five days to an elevation of 1800 metres at the edge of Penny Ice-cap. The first few days ended with sore thighs, confirmation that we were exercising different muscles while striding on skis with the sleds pulling at our hips. It also took a few days to develop a system for establishing and dismantling camp each day but, even with practice, erecting and securing the tents, reversing the procedure the next day and melting ice for water took more than four hours a day. We also erected an alarm trip-wire around camp for the first few nights to warn us of the approach of polar bears until we judged that we were far enough from the coast for the risk to be minimal.

The landscape changed gradually as we progressed up the glacier, with views becoming more extensive as we left the confining valley walls behind. It was rarely windy, a situation that continued for much of the trip, and made for far more consistently comfortable and scenic travel in the subzero conditions than expected as even a slight breeze soon felt bitter on exposed noses or ears. The final day up to the ice-cap included a couple of steeper sections and almost continuous deep, fresh snow; hard work for the leader ploughing a trench with the sled for

the rest of the group. But there was plenty to admire when resting from such efforts. It was another clear day, with mist filling the trench-like valley below and hiding the Coronation Glacier. Rising from the mist, vertical cliffs were capped by the ice that forms the margins of the Penny Ice-cap.

The rarely visited Penny Ice-cap, covering 5100 square kilometres with ice up to 300 metres thick, is among the last remnants of the huge ice sheet which blanketed Canada during the last ice age. Its rolling, dome-like summits rise to 2100 metres, the highest points on Baffin Island. We camped and undertook side-trips to these summits. Several days were then spent following interconnected glaciers generally southwards, and climbing another small peak which had a steep snow-slope outflanking a rock wall and a narrow summit snow ridge to add to the excitement. These ascents provided our first views of the enormous walls and jagged summits for which Auyuittuq National Park is best known.

Descending from the ice-cap was our first experience of downhill travel with the sleds. Unlike skiing downhill generally, this was rarely something to be savoured. On steeper slopes the best approach was usually to leave our ski skins on, release a length of plastic chain which was dragged beneath the sled as a brake, and head directly down the fall line. Attempts at traverses or fancy turns often resulted in the sled rolling and a need to unhitch in order to right it, potentially quite strenuous and with a risk that the sled could escape if the slope was steep.

Glaciers flowing from the Penny Ice-cap have abraded the ancient granitic bedrock

to produce the smooth, sheer cliff-faces that characterise peaks south-east of the ice-cap and provide almost unlimited climbing potential. The best known of these peaks are Mt Asgard and Thor; the overhanging (105°) upper West Face of the latter is one of the most striking cliff-faces on earth. I knew this, and had seen photographs of these famous peaks—nevertheless, as we approached from beyond the pass at the head of the Turner Glacier the sight of the 800 metre West Face of Mt Asgard, falling sheer from its unique, cylindrical twin summits, was unexpectedly stunning.

We spent several days in the Mt Asgard area undertaking a circuit of the Asgard massif and climbing Mt Alvit, the latter providing great views of peaks and glaciers in return for more than 1000 vertical metres of effort. The day's ski trip round Mt Asgard would have been pleasant if for no other reason than that we were briefly free of our sleds but it is an extraordinary outing, perhaps one of the best ski tours on earth. Our route took us up the aptly named Kings Parade Glacier with granite walls soaring skyward on both sides, across two passes and then back down the Turner Glacier beneath Mt Asgard's West Face.

Camping on the Turner Glacier, we saw our first sign of wildlife since Qikiqtarjuaq; Arctic fox (*Urocyon lagopus*) tracks in the snow. Foxes travel extensively in search of food but we wondered what it was searching for up on the snow-covered glacier. Later, while climbing a peak east of the Weasel valley, Greg and I came across Arctic hare (*Lepus arcticus*) tracks on a mountain ridge at almost 1500 metres. So perhaps the foxes pursue the hares up

Hauling sleds across the edge of the Penny Ice-cap; the Coronation Glacier access route lies in the cloud-filled valley beyond.



into the mountains, but who knows what the plant-eating hares are seeking up amongst rock, snow and ice?

The Turner Glacier steepens at its terminus and descending this proved exciting, but Louise was the only one to roll (in spectacular fashion) on this occasion. We were now in Akshayuk Pass, where the Owl and Weasel valleys bisect Cumberland Peninsula and provide a 100 kilometre trekking route between South and North Pangnirtung Fiords in summer. We skied south, a fast and easy nine kilometres across the flat surface of frozen Summit Lake to the source of the Weasel River, our route back to sea level.

Partly as an experiment and partly because of environmental considerations we had decided to carry all solid human waste. This was easier than first thoughts might suggest—there was plenty of space on the sleds (after all, they carried the original food) and the continuously freezing conditions meant the shit soon froze and generally stayed that way. We eventually disposed of our sizeable brown lumps in the large fly-out drum in one of the trekker's toilets in the Weasel Valley.

A couple of side-trips were undertaken during our descent of the Weasel Valley. A long ski up the Tupeq Glacier had us hot and sweaty once we climbed above the mist, then arduous step plugging up the final slope took three of us on to the summit of Mt Tupeq where we had good views across the surrounding country and back towards the Penny Ice-cap. A fast ski down the upper glacier turned eerie once we re-entered the mist. This was followed by an entertaining descent (mostly side-slipping) down a narrow

corridor of cascading ice through moraine below the glacier's snout.

Skins were stowed and crampons donned for the 35 kilometre descent to the head of South Pangnirtung Fiord. Crampon points barely penetrated the Weasel River's hard, glassy ice and the sleds glided almost without friction. So much so that with any sort of slope, let alone a frozen rapid, it was virtually impossible to keep them behind. It proved easier to unhitch and allow the sled to find its own way, either in front (deemed the 'shopping cart' method) or swinging from one arm to the side ('walking the dog').

Mt Thor towered fang-like ahead as we crunched down the frozen river. We eventually passed beneath the awesome 1000 metre West Face that rose beyond blue-green kettle lakes, their frozen surfaces a crazed jigsaw pattern. Areas of ice on the river were now thin or plastic-like and flexible, especially where water had flowed over the surface of older ice and subsequently frozen. On several occasions we broke through; fortunately this resulted in little more than boots and crampons becoming encased in ice as the water froze. The sleds also broke through but usually floated happily in their self-created pools until dragged on to ice again.

The snow cover rapidly decreased as we descended the valley to where patches of grass and sedge grew—the first vegetation we had seen for three weeks. As we soon discovered, the disappearing snow was only partly due to the onset of the spring thaw. The valley is something of a wind funnel and, in addition to scouring areas free of snow, the winds deposit drifts of sand and grit across the surface of the frozen, braided channels

of the river. Route finding for ice-leads amongst the sand drifts, in one instance in a sandstorm, was a surprising development for an Arctic trip. As the valley broadened, and the number of braided channels increased, picking the correct channel became something of a lottery. On several occasions ice-leads ended and gut-busting efforts were required to drag our sleds across mud or damp sand to another frozen channel.

Fortunately, South Pangnirtung Fiord was still frozen, so less than 30 kilometres of leisurely sea-ice travel remained. As we rounded the final headland the small town of Pangnirtung, and a smoke plume from its rubbish dump, came into view. The box-like toy houses grew as we crossed the final bay. Finding a route through a band of ice pressure-ridges was the last obstacle before heated buildings, hot showers and the flight back south the following day. 

Grant Dixon

works part time for the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service and has spent much of his free time exploring and photographing remote parts of the world. However, he is always drawn home to the wild, natural landscapes of South-west Tasmania.







BESIDE THE SEASIDE

The Shipwreck Coast

Stuart Coleman finds 'walking gold' at Cape Otway

IT HAD BEEN A WHILE SINCE I HAD LAST WALKED PAST THE Cape Otway lighthouse towards Station Beach and, convinced that I was heading in the right direction, I wandered off down the track. As I walked past Noel I thought it necessary to reassure him: 'nah, nah, nah, it's this way'. We reached a dead end about 15 minutes later, a substantial wall of coastal scrub blocking any further progress.

The Cape Otway lighthouse was the second building of its kind constructed on mainland Australia. Standing 90 metres above sea level, it has watched over an 84 kilometre stretch of ocean known as the 'eye of the needle' since 1848. Recently a solar-powered beacon has taken over the role of the lighthouse, but from the cliffs that surround the point the lighthouse still stands tall, keeping a watch over this entrance to Bass Strait. This is the Shipwreck Coast, recognised more for disasters than for coastal walks, yet a day spent amongst the isolation and rugged beauty of this area will leave you wondering why.

The idea of a walk from Cape Otway to Johanna entirely along the coast had interested me for a while.

Victoria's Shipwreck Coast is the sort of place where you feel that you might well run into Long John Silver. Both photos Stuart Coleman

Could it be done? How long would it take? The trouble had been to organise a space in the calendar and to find someone with whom to do it. I mentioned the idea to Noel; he was keen and the weekend before Christmas suited us both.

In the weeks before the walk, I hadn't really kept an eye on the weather although I expected it would be hot and dry. No rain had fallen in the area for almost six weeks. As with any trip planned in advance, weather only plays a superficial role except in the most extreme cases—two metres of snow, one metre of rain, a cyclone. On the morning we arrived it was like stepping into a sauna fully clothed. Ominous, grey clouds heavy with rain approached like something from the end of the world. Flies, slowed down by the humidity and attracted to us by the smell of sweat, migrated in the hundreds to our packs and bodies. We couldn't be bothered to swat them; they couldn't be bothered to move. We began our walk from just outside the lighthouse grounds, heading off in the vague direction of Station Beach; a green post and a small, orange arrow pointing towards the sky helped us on our way. After the first attempt to reach Station Beach had failed, we headed off down a newer-looking track going over Payters Hill. From the top we gained an elevated view of the lighthouse and surrounds before continuing along the track to the old cemetery and back into the scrub once more. By the time we first glimpsed the coastline through windows of tea-tree, shields of rain were moving silently across the sky towards us. Within ten minutes we were clear of the scrub surrounding Cape Otway and out on to the escarpment above Station Beach, the ocean far below. From the clifftop we could see Rotten Point, the easterly end of Johanna Beach, well off in the distance, and headland beyond headland lay between us and our destination. The track at this point passes well back from the cliff-edge, providing stunning views in all directions. We found our way easily through a mini-moonscape of heavily eroded rocks and rubble, a few small cairns helping to join the dots. With each step that took us down towards the beach the air became thicker and the flies slower. From above, a mist could be seen making its way across the ocean, white caps appearing in its wake. Upon setting foot in the sand, the heavens opened—from dry to wet in a matter of seconds. I threw my pack on to the sand and unclipped its lid, struggling hopelessly to reach my rain jacket. Noel, opting for the energy-saving technique, just stood there.

Like being thrown into a shower fully clothed, there is no point arguing, you are suddenly wet. I gave up the search for my jacket; I had passed the point of diminishing returns within about two seconds of my pack hitting the sand. For the next hour we walked through constant sheets of rain, our boots were full of water and our clothes were dripping, no longer from sweat. Fortunately, the flies had all gone. The rain at first brought relief from the heat, but with the weather

our negative state of mind I brought forward 'Plan B'. 'Why not just blitz it all the way to Johanna this afternoon. Find a phone, call our lift, get picked up and dry out in the comfort of home?' Simple. By the time we had made our decision and finished the pasta, our clothes had stopped getting wetter, our energy was returning—and so were the flies.

We spent the next four kilometres hopping and scrambling nervously across boulders and rock ledges sharpened by the relentless

and driving force of wind and ocean. Jagged headlands overlapped one into the next as we walked along the border of ocean and shore. Unstable footing and the unsettling noise of waves crashing to our left nibbled away in the back of our minds. To be trapped along this edge of the coast would be truly frightening. Between Castle Cove and the Aire River mouth there is no easy way out. Up, over, darting between waves,



The descent to the eastern end of Johanna Beach.

front came a biting wind straight off the Southern Ocean. Station Beach gives little protection from the elements and it wasn't long before we began to think about shelter. Could we build one? Lengths of driftwood lay scattered across the reaches of sand, enough to imagine a shelter, but barely enough to make one.

By the time we reached the Aire River a chill had begun to sink in and the rain had only just stopped. Under the cliffs on the western bank we found some limited shelter and took the opportunity to cook a packet of pasta and reconsider our plans. The original plan had been to spend the night at a little clearing underneath the cliffs towards Castle Cove, before heading on to Johanna the following day. We were wet and cold, waiting for the pasta to cook faster, and in

progress was steady but not rushed. The tide was low and with rock pools and small sections of beach exposed, a treasure of colours and creatures captured our attention constantly. By midday the clouds were marching away to the north and our clothes were dry. Rounding yet one more headland we were suddenly at the edge of a huge amphitheatre, Castle Cove. If you have ever driven along the Great Ocean Road from Apollo Bay, this is the point where you first see the Southern Ocean.

A well-worn track leads to the top of Castle Cove where we took the opportunity to put our packs down and enjoy the elevated view. From above, the waves are small and we could no longer feel the energy of them releasing on to the rocks. In the past I had seen this coast in its most violent moods. With huge swells cursing at the shore, it's easy to picture a sailing ship being forced coldly to disaster.

The formidable headland at the western end of the Castle Cove had always left me with the impression that there is no way round the coastline to Johanna. Perhaps there is on the lowest tides and most calm

seas, but after the first stage of the morning's walk I wasn't too sure about the ongoing spirit of misadventure. I had never walked from Castle Rock to Rotten Point before, so we decided on a slight detour up the Great Ocean Road. The solid footing of bitumen was a nice change from sand and rocks, but the novelty wore off within about 50 metres. The next two kilometres were spent slogging up the hill, sucking in the fumes of traffic heading off to better-known attractions. We turned off the main road and began to follow a dirt vehicle track, passing an unmarked gate after about 500 metres. This is the way to Rotten Point. Through the gate and across a cleared paddock, we headed back into the scrub along a seldom used vehicle track. By this time in

the afternoon the flies had all returned, we had reached the end of the vehicle track and, surprisingly, a small, orange arrow pointed towards the sky.

Slowly the sun was moving closer to the horizon and it was Noel who first spotted the snake. It was summer, and of course there should be snakes. Rain and constant scrambling from earlier in the day had taken our minds off other dangers. On went the gaiters, away went the snake and the walking track began to disappear.

Coastal scrub is brutal, to put it kindly; the proverbial carrot dangling in front of us was the eastern end of Johanna Beach. We could see it below. But the further we followed what we thought to be a track, the less we saw of the track. This only helped to get us further and further into a jungle of impenetrable, head-high tea-tree. As we battled slowly downwards, left, right, under, over and through, it didn't take long to develop any number of methods which we thought might improve our progress. Falling backwards, crawling under, climbing over: the idea of walking easily down to the beach had disappeared long ago with the snake. There is a lot to be said about the blindness of adventure and the desire to find the hardest possible way to the closest point. The 500 metres from the end of the vehicle track to the beach as the crow would fly took nearly an hour. During this time we managed to find the only section of cliff guarding the easterly end of the beach. One hundred metres on and 25 minutes later we reached sea level. We were covered with scratches, stinging from sweat. Broken twigs were sticking out of our heads in a knotted mess of hair and spider webs and it was about three kilometres to the camping ground. Being on the sand was a relief.

It was a short distance from the camping ground to the nearest house with a phone and, following a brief explanation of the day's events, the home-owner agreed to let us use their phone. Maybe we could catch our lift a day early, I thought. Nobody answered. 'Plan C': perhaps we could hitch back? The few cars that passed were full or too small. Why not camp here? Mmm. Our first steps had been taken some ten hours earlier and the distance we had covered was just under 20 kilometres. We were dry, we still had some food and our tents and sleeping-bags were at the bottom of our packs. The walking had been continuous and taxing for a great part of the day. Sleep came easily.

On Sunday there weren't any large, black clouds pressing down from above. It was blue sky to the horizon and with five hours to spare, we had plenty of time to explore

the walk AT A GLANCE

Grade	Medium-difficult
Length	One-two days
Type	Beach, coastal scrambling, coastal scrub
Region	Otway National Park, southwest Victoria
Nearest towns	Apollo Bay, Lavers Hill
Start/finish	Start at Cape Otway, finish at Johanna car park
Access	Cape Otway and Johanna Beach are approximately three-and-a-half hours' drive from Melbourne
Maps	Great Ocean Road and Otway Ranges 1:50 000; Glenaire 1:25 000; and Cape Otway 1:25 000

Further reading

Walking the Otways track notes compiled by the Geelong Bushwalking Club provides some information on the route followed

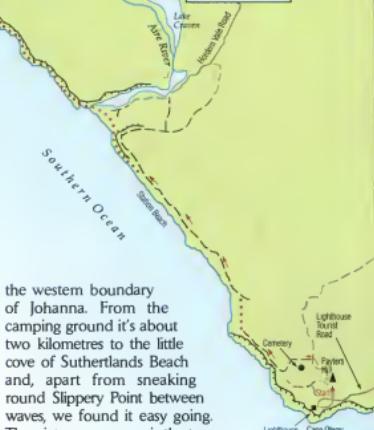
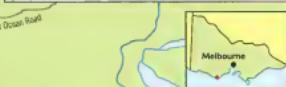
Best time Check for low tides and small swells

Special points

The walk is not a loop and there is no easy, cheap or regular transport to and from the start/finish. Two cars may be required. Be prepared for difficult rock scrambling, waves, possible river crossing, beach walking and heavy scrub. Some markers can be found; they are vague guides at best. There is no mobile phone coverage anywhere along the route in case of emergency. You must provide all your own fresh water. Official camping is available at the Aire River crossing and Johanna

The Shipwreck Coast

1 2 3 km
Vehicle track ----- Route •••••
Walking track - - - Cliff - - -
Not for navigation. Use listed maps.



the western boundary of Johanna. From the camping ground it's about two kilometres to the little cove of Sutherlands Beach and, apart from sneaking round Slipper Point between waves, we found it easy going. The picturesque cove is the turnaround point, a cliff stands as a barrier protecting a seemingly impassable section of coastline. In the distance we could see only towering headlands stretching around to Cape Volney and beyond to some of the tallest coastal cliffs on mainland Australia. The scale and beauty of this environment, crafted entirely by the elements, is a simple reminder of just how small we really are and how easily we could get into trouble. The swell was beginning to rise, as was the tide, and when we returned round Slipper Point our footprints disappeared behind us.

Stuart Coleman

has been in front of a camera since he was born but behind the lens since 1987. His preference is to be on the outside of an office and not wearing a suit. He sees the outdoors as an excuse to take a camera for a walk and return home late on a Sunday night.







A BLUE MOUNTAINS FAVOURITE

Kowmung

Roger Lembit describes a spring trip to the river beloved by generations of New South Wales bushwalkers

WAFF DRIPPED OFF THE HEATH, THE MIST SWIRLED IN the deep valley to our left. We sped across the flat tops following the track which passed across wet sandstone rocks between patches of dense scrub. Occasionally we had to leap across pools of water. Last night's rain had left its mark on the plateau.

We plunged into a deeper trench between banksia scrub as the track dipped into a gully, then strode uphill to a clear, rocky platform overlooking the depths of Kanangra Creek. The view was tremendous, the cliffs and waterfalls of Kanangra Deep occasionally obscured by the mist monsters as they played in the early morning light. We stopped to gather our thoughts, take a few photos and suck in the awesome grandeur.

As many bushwalkers have done at Pioneers Prospect, we checked our maps and discussed our plans for the weekend. The weather was clearing and likely to stay warm and sunny for a few days—the type of weather which makes a trip to the Kowmung River

Crossing the Kowmung River in the Bulga Denis Canyon, David Noble

a delightful adventure for a spring weekend.

After a good break we followed our route south, past Mt Maxwell. On this occasion we managed to avoid the false lead which, if followed, adds an extra quarter of an hour or so to the trip. We passed through montane heath, the occasional patch of woodland, and the notorious bog east of Storm Stallion Point to reach the cliff-edge south of Murrarang Head.

We found the scramble down fairly easy although the dampness meant that the tree stumps we used for handholds were slippery. Fortunately, our packs were light. It was only a two-day trip and we had not filled them

through open woodland, with some patches of more dense forest on sheltered south-facing slopes. In some of the saddles the shrub layer is more dense with thick patches of golden-tip, a yellow-flowered member of the pea family. 'No ridgework stinging trees here,' remarked Ian, who had been a participant of last year's long-weekend frolic along the Colbys Range, the next main ridge to the west.

Having been bitten before, we took care on Bullhead Mountain; another false lead could have delayed our first swim of the day. The temperature rose as the September sun had burnt off the last of the mist. Our fleeces were now unnecessary, at least until



Above, lapping it up; a walker gets into the spirit of a visit to the Kowmung. Roger Lembit. Right, descending from Cambage Spire to the Kowmung River at the start of the Bulga Denis Canyon. Noble

with various luxury items we sometimes took on longer trips to the river.

At the bottom of the pass the track sidles to the east, past postum-wood trees. These cool-temperate rainforest plants are relics from the last ice age, when snowfalls in the area were far more frequent than at present. Evidence of an even more ancient era is visible here: a coal-seam outcropping at the base of the cliff. Further on, erosion of the seam has formed an overhang, a spot for bushwalkers to stop during rain or camp overnight—the Coal Seam Cave. Before continuing we had a brief drink from the plastic bucket which fills from drips falling from the roof of the cave.

From the Coal Seam Cave the track heads south-east for about a kilometre before reaching a junction. Today our route would take us south along Bullhead Ridge, along one of the most direct and spectacular access ways towards the Kowmung. The track winds round a hill where the woodland has been carved up for a helicopter landing ground during a long-past bushfire. I noted the re-growth of the silvertop ash.

The track along Bullhead Ridge is generally well defined and quite easy to follow. It passes

evening. Another kilometre of ridge bashing passed and we reached the tall, bony pinnacle which is Cambage Spire.

From Cambage Spire the track descends steeply down quartzite cliffs, following narrow ledges. Whilst the hand- and footholds are numerous, the exposed nature of the traverse requires care. A slip could mean a nasty fall and a helicopter ride home. More steep descents, loose scree slopes, minor clifflines and views of Arabanoo Creek far below us to the right led us to the nettle-infested campsite where I had once camped with Ross, Dave and Michael. There was no sign of recent use, the grass had succumbed to competition from more prickly plants over a decade ago.

The sound of the river became quite loud and we emerged from the forest on to the rocky banks of the Kowmung/Christys Creek junction.

Winter and early spring rains had ensured that Christys was up. The creek jumped and sparkled across the broad, shingle-carpeted flat which is a feature of the junction. We rested from our morning exertion and delved into our packs to search out chocolate, jelly snakes and fruit.

Dave was keen to explore the lower reaches of Christys Creek, so we left our packs on the bank and headed up. Belts of river oak shaded the steadily flowing creek. We found that the lower reaches of Christys Creek pass through a narrow gorge, flanked by steep slopes and small, quartzite cliffs. We stopped to look at each of the deeper pools that are regularly spaced along the creek, our eyes piercing the sun-dappled water searching for the flash of colour of a trout. We reached the large pool at the junction of Arabanoo and Christys Creeks and, sure enough, the pool had about 20 large fish in it. However, the pool was too deep and cold to contemplate the capture of the healthy rainbow trout we could see milling in the deepest part of the pool. Maybe next time.

'A perfect spring afternoon and what better way to spend it, sitting by the Blue Mountains' premier wilderness river.'

We returned to our packs and entered the start of the Bulga Denis Canyon, probably the most scenic and enjoyable section of the Kowmung River.

A few hundred metres downstream we passed the base of Bulga Cone, a ridge which leads east towards Byrnes Gap and the Axe-head Mountains. 'I'm glad we're not climbing up there today,' said Sue. The sun was getting higher and the temperature was rising at midday approached.

We crossed from one side of the river to another, our legs numbed by the deep, cold water. We stopped on a sandy flat above the river for lunch. A large pool proved too tempting and despite the coolness of the water we dived in. After a brief but invigorating dip we sunned ourselves on the sandy river bank.

A leisurely lunch followed, a mix of jaffles filled with tuna, corn, tomatoes and cheese; cups of tea; a slice of cake and a few sweet biscuits. We relaxed, read sections of the paper and chatted about earlier visits to the river, the coming Ashes series, work and various characters we had walked with over the years. After some time and one last cup of tea, we realised that the afternoon sun was getting lower. We had another four kilometres of river bashing before reaching our intended camp-site, so we briskly packed up, doused the fire and departed.

More river-crossings, shingle banks and the odd, dense thicket of river oak interspersed by water gums followed. I was in front, the lead having changed several times as differ-



ent approaches had been taken to the minor problems we had encountered in navigating our way down the river. I saw a dark shape a short distance ahead of me, in the middle of a sunny gap in the riverside forest. The shape moved slightly, a flash of red underneath. Startled, I jumped sideways about a metre. My fellow walkers scattered. The red-bellied black snake woken from its basking in the sun slithered quickly into its bolt-hole, showing no inclination to be vindictive about our clumsy intrusion into its domain.

Rounding a bend, we saw a low saddle in front of us. The saddle was part of Bullhead Buttress, a ridge which leads from Great Stony Mountain to the river. Crossing over the saddle would save us over a kilometre of river walking, so we headed up the steep slopes through grey myrtle, grey gums and stringybarks. It was a climb of almost 100 metres and our backs were a lather of sweat as we reached the saddle, the river curving behind and in front of us. A steep, scree-covered descent brought us back to the river bank. The crossing was rather deep at this point so we headed upstream a hundred metres to the nearest shingle bank and waded across. The shadows were lengthening

as the sun moved lower in the sky. A breeze hummed through the river oak leaves, intermittently cold then warm as eddies in the gorge moved pods of air in alternate directions. We followed the left bank of the river and rounded a bend.

In front of us was a large, grassy flat. To the right a long, deep pool bounded on the opposite side of the river by a colourful cliff. We had arrived at Orange Bluff—our intended camp-site for the night. The more industrious members of the party erected their tent flies and collected small amounts of wood for the fire. I decided to relax and listen to the sound of the wind in the casuarinas. Noisy friar birds, recent arrivals from their winter domiciles, chattered in the nearby forest. A perfect spring afternoon and what better way to spend it, sitting by the Blue Mountains' premier wilderness river.

We sat around the fire, consuming more jaffles, pasta and a bottle or two of Shiraz. The clear skies and lack of moon permitted a view of the myriad of stars visible away from urban lights. Dave pointed out a couple of planets.

Clear skies meant a cold night and it was with great reluctance that I rose from my sleeping bag to light the breakfast fire. I quickly had the billy boiling and delivered the first cup of tea for the day to Dave, still curled up in his bag.

The walk out, whilst necessitating a vertical ascent of over 800 metres, was a trip we had done many times before so we weren't fussed about an early start. We slacked off on the river, ambled downstream to search for regenerating red cedar saplings on the more sheltered flats, then returned to the camp-site to pack our gear and consume our elevenses.

Reluctantly, we threw on our packs and started the ascent. The lower slopes support a mix of narrow-leaved ironbark and grey gum. The ground cover is sparse—small shale pebbles broken by the occasional patch of nodding blue lilies. Brumby Ridge gives intermittent views up the river. We glanced at the route we had taken down the river through the Bulga Denis Canyon, never stopping lest this be taken as a sign of tiredness. Each of us strove to demonstrate to the others that we were still as fit as on our first trip to the area.

Passing one false top, then climbing steeply up the ridge, we reached the flat expanse of Brumby Mountain in good time. A slight descent to a scrubby saddle led to the stepped climb towards First Top. Approaching this summit on the Gingra Range we passed a large population of grass trees. I stopped to suck the nectar off some of the flowers. A recent fire had caused a proliferation of flowers and the sweetness was too good to pass by.

At First Top, the bulk of the climbing had been completed. We stopped for lunch, allowing us to recapture our poise for the final leg of our trip. As we ate, Ian noticed that there was a build up of clouds, with some spectacular columns of grey and white appearing in the western sky.

The post-lunch task entailed a walk along the Gingra Range. We met our route of the

previous day after travelling not much more than a kilometre. With time to spare we stayed on the ridge crest to climb Cottage Rock and enjoy the view towards Mt Colong, Bymes Gap and the Blue Breaks. It was still sunny towards the east.

Soon we passed another group of walkers at the Coal Seam Cave, one of whom had a nasty gash in his hand from scratching for the last bit of tuna in a tin. We took the scenic route round the base of the cliffs for even more views of Mt Colong, then climbed back on to the Tops.

The wind was picking up and the electricity in the air fired our senses. We jogged through the heath, our light weekend packs no impediment to rapid progress. The sky darkened.

As we reached Pioneers Prospect large drops of rain began to fall. The sky to the west was a deep greenish-grey colour. Oblivious to the impending doom, we stopped to enjoy the view of Kanangra Deep, Thurat Spires and the Tops once again.

Suddenly a flash of lightning filled the sky and shortly afterwards a heart-rending clap of thunder drowned out all other sounds. The sound of raindrops morphed into the clutter of hailstones smashing on the sandstone and scrub. We quickly rummaged through our packs to find our parkas and trudged back towards the cars. The lightning and thunder had passed over us towards the sunny east, but the hail and rain continued, the intensity of the precipitation drenching us despite our state-of-the-art rain gear. As we passed the gully which leads to the Dance Floor Cave, the hail turned to light, icy rain.

The puddles along the level track back to the cars were dotted with cherry-sized hailstones. We dried ourselves in the interpretation shelter at the car park, then headed to Hampton for a well-earned game of pool.

Kowmung River



Roger Lembit

gets paid to go bushwalking and look at plants. A member of the Sydney Uni Bushwalking Club, he often visits the Blue Mountains, Kosciuszko and Tasmania. Over the years he has walked every centimetre of the Kowmung River.



Misadventure at Green Mountains

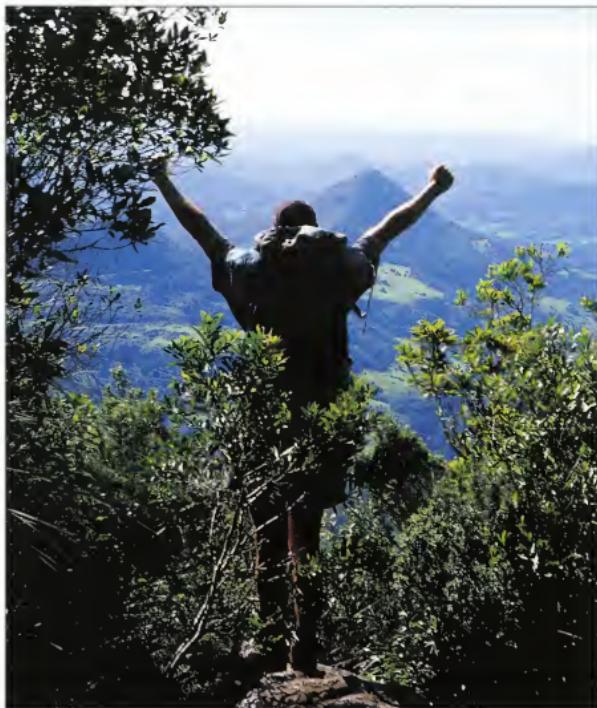
Simon Collyer experiences heavy going on a classic south-east Queensland walk

WE LAY ON OUR BACKS—FREEZING—NEXT to a small pile of burnt material that was once our tent, exposed to the elements high in the McPherson Range, when it began to rain again. Through the trees I could make out the familiar, turbulent, cloudy sky that had been bounding the range for the last two weeks, swelling the creeks and uprooting trees in our path. I despaired at the thought of the 'hut' nearby—four posts around a pool of water. Knowing some kind of action was required to avoid soaking my last dry clothes I struggled to sit up and in doing so awoke from my semi-conscious delusion. I could see the sky through a small gap in the trees above. It was full of welcome stars. The rain had broken!

Two days earlier, we had set off to walk from Christmas Creek to Green Mountains in the Lamington National Park, south-east Queensland. The first day would take us up the range past the infamous Stinson plane-crash site to the edge of the escarpment and the remnants of the second-largest known volcano in the world (once more than 100 kilometres across), the centre of which is Mt Warning. The second day would be a hard slog through thick rainforest to the welcoming Rat a tat Hut, and the third day would take us to Green Mountains and from there to civilisation.

The rain of the previous two weeks continued steadily as we set out. We were forced to leave transport early and ford some deep mountain torrents below the ridge. Just before the climb we passed Westray's grave. Westray, one of three initial survivors of the Stinson crash, and badly burnt, had made a valiant attempt to reach civilisation, only to fall down a waterfall. O'Reilly discovered him sitting peacefully facing down the valley, with his back resting against a rock, a cigarette in his hand and even began to speak to him before he realised that Westray was dead.

It was heavy going as we climbed and at one stage the rock face was a veritable waterfall. We were thoroughly exhausted and completely soaked by the time we reached the clearing near the crash site at the end of the day. Before tackling the last kilometre to the Point Lookout clearing we took the opportunity to replenish our water supply and try to find the wreck of an airliner that had come to a fiery end during a cyclone in 1937. The complete story of heroism and survival is well related by Bernard O'Reilly in his book *Green Mountains*, a copy of which I had in my pack to read at night. Until the mid-1980s there was substantial twisted wreckage to see but on this visit there was not much



The author at Echo Point, celebrating finally reaching a graded track and having a break in the cloud cover. Mark Patrick

more than a concrete memorial plaque. The crash site was unusually clear of vegetation yet covered with loose rubble, so we assumed that the rain-soaked hillside had slid over the site. Light was failing so we made a dash for Point Lookout on the escarpment edge about 30 minutes away before setting up camp in the dark and pouring rain. Dinner was cooked in the vestibule and we contemplated the difficult journey ahead. On the way up we had spoken to two parties of army types who had got to this point and turned back, deciding that the storm damage had made the jungle impenetrable. Unfortunately, we had no transport back the

way we had come. We decided to press on. As the wind and rain continued, we lay there while I read excerpts from O'Reilly's book by the light of the candle lantern. We contemplated the horror the survivors had endured nearby waiting through seven dark, cold, wet nights in a cyclone. Unable to walk, they lay exposed to the elements with their dead companions around them. Proud, completely immobilised by maggot-infested fractures, was dependent on Binstead's five-hour crawl through the undergrowth to the creek for water. The heroic but doomed rescue attempt of Jim Westray and the ultimately successful rescue by O'Reilly himself were

unimaginable feats of endurance. I found myself hearing voices in the rain as I fell asleep.

The next morning we were greeted again by the rain and decided to dress in the cold, wet clothes from the day before, saving dry clothes for the coming night. For the next 48 hours we were unable to focus on more than a few metres in front of our eyes. We had a good, waterproofed, topographical map and a compass. We took turns navigating and were meticulous about it the whole way, knowing that if we got lost it would be a tricky place to get out of. We tracked our course along bends of the ridge although it was often hard to tell what was ridge and what was not in the thick jungle. I've walked the Kokoda Track in New Guinea and untamed jungle in Java—both of which have consistently steeper tracks—but Australia's own Green Mountains' jungle is in my experience by far the thickest, most treacherous and most inhospitable. For a start you have lawyer vines—long, thin, insidious vines covered in razor-sharp spikes that catch hold of you and dig in deeper the more you struggle. You have to try to peel your way free and in doing so you usually get tangled in many more tentacles. We encountered not just a few but thousands of these things. I wore a tough polyester army shirt in anticipation of this and while my clothes were reminiscent of

a wannabe commando, they helped enormously. Mark wore a very stylish cotton singlet. I remember him laughing at my clothes when we set out but he didn't laugh when we were hauling through lawyer vines. On top of this we were the first party of the season to attempt the route. The park is closed for two months over Christmas, so any semblance of a track was well and truly gone. After two weeks of relentless rain the soil was soaked and loose and many trees

during such a detour in a fit of frustration I foolishly attempted to rip my way through, crashing and tearing, dragging bunches of vines and a large part of the forest behind me, much to Mark's amusement. Last but not least of the obstacles were the incessant rain and cloud which were with us the entire way, making it a bone-soaking, cold and visually challenging experience. Our flimsy rain jackets were literally torn to shreds in the first hour of the 12-hour walk on the

'Our flimsy rain jackets were literally torn to shreds in the first hour.'

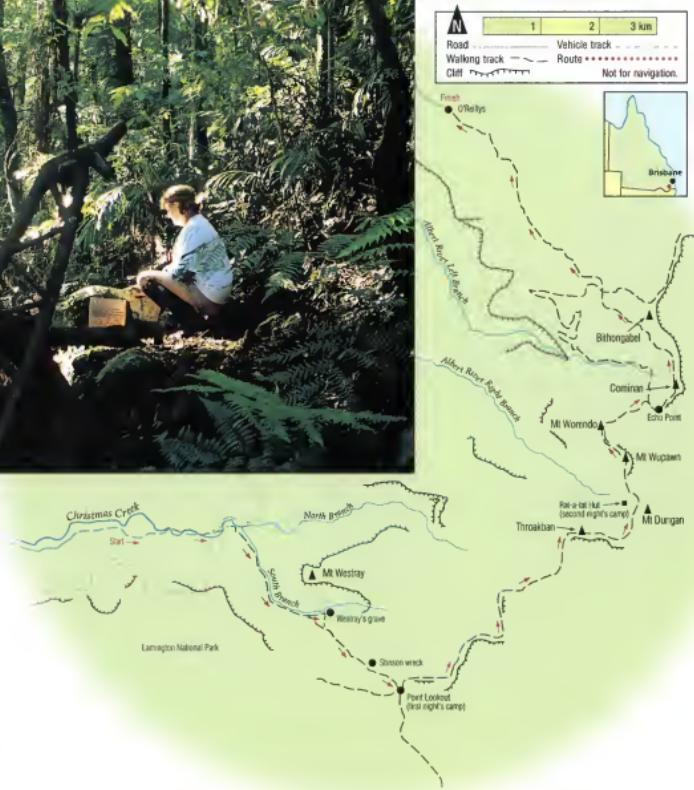
had toppled in the roaring wind. These winds hit the cliffs a kilometre below and swoop up and over and down on to the trees. It was this wind-shear effect during a cyclone that was believed to have brought down the airliner 60 years earlier. As the trees fell they dragged down clouds of vine and other trees that were often two metres in diameter and covered in moss, so climbing over them was impossible. Lengthy detours through vicious vines were usually very unpleasant. Once

second day. We scrunched up the pathetic remains and stuffed them in our packs. Nothing is as waterproof as human skin as long as you keep walking to keep out the cold. For lunch we stopped only very briefly on Mt Throakban—at 1140 metres the highest point of the journey and only 16 metres lower than Mt Warning—the volcano for which Throakban forms part of the outer rim. It was from the top of Throakban that, by some miracle, O'Reilly spotted a burnt



The site of the Stinson wreck is a sombre place which gives rise to reflection. John Daly

Green Mountains



tree 13 kilometres away that turned out to be the one the airliner had struck. For O'Reilly to navigate over eight hours through the jungle, with as little as ten metres visibility, precisely to that tree without seeing it again until he was 20 metres from the spot was a truly legendary feat of bushcraft! After only a few minutes on Throakbahn the cold became unbearable so we set off. We wondered how we would fare if we didn't locate Rat-a-tat Hut before nightfall.

We plodded on and by about 4 pm, to our great relief, we reached the 'hut' in the shadow of Mt Durigan. After all the fantasy images about a warm, dry hut with a fireplace and bunks, we moaned as we discovered what was actually four crooked posts around a pool of

water. Fortunately, there was a small clearing close by that was large enough to camp in.

We set up the tent and removed our shoes to dry our feet, staggering around tenderly. The pressure lantern had run out of fuel the night before and we decided to refuel it by a log before it got dark. In retrieving the opened fuel bottle, a trail of petrol spilt between the lantern and the tent. When the lantern was lit, so was the fuse. The tent went up like a Kuwaiti oil well. I leaped from the

water. Fortunately, there was a small clearing close by that was large enough to camp in.

We had known that the sun was out above the canopy from the glinting speckles of light above, but for the entire trip we had not yet seen it. At Echo Point we were greeted by a glorious blue sky and we finally felt the sun's warmth on our skin. We sat basking on the rocky peninsula, looking down on northern New South Wales. The view was like that from an aeroplane, a quilt pattern of farms in our neighbouring State far below, all in the shadow of Mt Warning. O'Reilly described the same view during his rescue attempt: 'a green map dotted with farmhouses which looked like mushrooms'. From Echo Point we made good time on the graded track and arrived at the road head within a few hours.

After tending to the survivors O'Reilly hurried down to raise the alarm, leading a rescue party back to the crash site. Birinstead and Proud were carried down the mountain on stretchers and loaded into ambulances just 11 hours after O'Reilly had set out, on his own, in the morning darkness. In the end the maggots on Proud's leg were what saved his life as they stopped his wounds from becoming gangrenous. It was a feat of inspiration for O'Reilly to go looking where he did on the McPherson Range in Queensland when newspapers were touting the crash site as within ten minutes of Sydney!

Fortunately for us our bus fare had survived the journey. We boarded the bus with great relief and on the way down the range were further rewarded with the sight of a complete double-rainbow. We arrived back at the Brisbane Transit Centre filthy, stinking, bleeding, unshaven—and perhaps a little sheepish. 'How was the trip?' we were asked.

'Pretty good, actually.'

Photo Robert Rankin

doomed tent faster than a cat out of a trap. Initially we both looked on in shock before coming to our senses and trying to retrieve the slower-burning sleeping-bags, sleeping-mats, compass, map, food, and so on. With the light fading, it was not a good feeling to be miles from civilisation, soaked and without shelter. We had to decide whether to make a dash for O'Reilly's, 15 kilometres away, in the dark or stick it out in the bush for a night in the wind and rain.

We weren't sure how far away the graded track was and decided that to attempt thick bush in the dark was tantamount to suicide. It was hard enough to navigate by daylight. The sky was beginning to clear and by some miracle we seemed to have saved the bare minimum of equipment for the night. The stove was resurrected, some of the food had survived and our walking boots were intact. The map looked like black flakes inside bubble wrap but somehow the only legible part was that from the hut to 'home'. The remnants of my bag protected my torso, my expensive, new Therm-a-Rest had gone down but still provided some insulation. Mark made a vain attempt to get comfortable, rocking uncontrollably back and forth trying to balance on the remaining two tubes of a four-tube air mattress.

It was during that night that I had my rain dream and also an attack from what must be the fattest and most persistent possum I've felt/seen in my life. Without a tent it was open season on us and our belongings, and nothing I did would dissuade the possum. The jungle is usually black at night but this site was faintly lit from stars through a tiny gap in the canopy and also from the enchanting, fuzzy glow of worms on the surrounding tree trunks. It felt like Christmas to be dry and surrounded by such a beau-

Sirian Collyer
is an avid long-distance walker and project manager at the University of Queensland. As a child he family spent holidays exploring National Parks in Queensland and New South Wales. As an adult he has worked in National Parks in Indonesia and New Guinea, but most often he can be found exploring tracks and trails in south-east Queensland.



Walker information

Lamington National Park

Lamington National Park covers more than 20,600 hectares and marks the NSW-Queensland border. The park is made up of two sections, Binna Burra and Green Mountains, and lies on the southern side of the Scenic Rim, a chain of mountains stretching from the Gold Coast hinterland to Mt Mistake. In 1994 Lamington National Park was listed as part of the Central Eastern Rainforest Reserves (Australia) World Heritage Area which includes the most extensive areas of subtropical rainforest in the world, most of the world's warm temperate rainforest and nearly all of the Antarctic beech cool temperate rainforest. Overnight bushwalkers must contact the Ranger at Green Mountains in advance to apply for a bush-camping permit and to check on conditions. Bush camping is closed between 1 December and 31 January each year. Be prepared for extremes in weather conditions. Green Mountains is 115 kilometres from Brisbane by Canungra, or 70 kilometres from the Gold Coast by Nerang and Canungra. Green Mountains has a camping ground, hot showers, toilets, public telephone, and accommodation at O'Reilly's Rainforest Guesthouse in private land adjoining the park. A kiosk sells meals and some basic supplies. There are many graded tracks suitable for day walks.

Mt Warning

Mt Warning, the second-largest extinct shield volcano in the world, is where the sun's first rays touch the Australian mainland. When its activity finished about 20 million years ago, the volcano had risen to a height of more than two kilometres. Layers of ash and lava had been deposited over its outward slopes, to a diameter of about 100 kilometres. During the past 20 million years the vast majority of the material has been eroded away. What remains is still mighty impressive. Mt Warning, the central plug, and a system of ring dykes are extremely hard and have resisted erosion. The rim of the caldera is protected by a cap of very hard rock and forms a virtual semicircle of vertical cliffs that make up the McPherson Range.



Canoeing Pioneers on the Snowy River

The historic first descent of the Snowy River from Jindabyne to the sea, by Peter Hogan

'DON'T BE AN ADJECTIVAL FOOL, ARTHUR; if you go down there you'll never come back. Why, there are places there the blacks have never seen', said a Monaro bushman when Arthur Hunt told him of his plan to canoe the Snowy River from Jindabyne, New South Wales, to its mouth at Marlo, Victoria. Despite the warning, Hunt and a mate, Stanley Hanson, set off in an overloaded, wooden canoe without life-jackets and with limited white-water canoeing experience, wearing boots that nearly sank them when they capsized. It took them two months but against huge odds they succeeded, arriving in Marlo to a hero's welcome on 20 April 1937.

Hunt kept a diary during the trip and took numerous photos. It is not known what happened to these but fortunately he wrote a series of articles about his adventure that appeared in the *Sydney Mail*, a weekly newspaper that has ceased publication.

Even today, with much better equipment and a greater knowledge of the river, a canoe trip down the Snowy is a bit of an adventure. A popular trip with canoeists is



Stanley Hanson running a rapid. All uncredited photos Peter Hanson collection

men of the time, they took a good supply of flour, tea and sugar as well as tins of butter and jam. They also took a gun for game, and fishing lines. Hunt prepared a first aid kit with the help of a doctor, a nurse and a pharmacist. Other equipment included a camera, a gold dish, a pick, a compass and an aneroid barometer. Anticipating wear and tear on his backside, Hunt had an

three previous trips so it was reconditioned for the Snowy River trip with extra planking, a false keel and chafing-battens for protection from rocks. Two lengths of rope, about 18 metres long, were attached to the front and the back for roping the canoe over rocks. Despite the careful reconditioning, the canoe started to leak after just a few days. By the time they got to Dalgety, the first town downstream from Jindabyne, several cracks were letting in water and some of the chafing-battens had come away from the planks. They camped for three days near Dalgety, repairing the canoe between bouts of playing cards while waiting for the rain to stop. There were a few more stops for repairs during the journey.

When he made his epic journey Hunt was a 30-year-old bachelor who ran a family business selling wine and spirits. He never married and lived with his mother in Goulburn for most of his life. Hunt was a keen sportsman and a member of a local theatre group. He made several pioneering canoe trips in the 1930s including five months canoeing the Murrumbidgee River from near Canberra, and following the Murray River to its mouth at Encounter Bay. I'm told he later had a plan to start a nudist colony on an island in Jervis Bay but abandoned it when he found that navy planes flew over the island. He died in 1958.

Hunt's companion on the trip was 42-year-old Stanley Hanson from Nowra, on the NSW coast. Hunt and Hanson had been on shooting, fishing and camping trips together and Hunt felt that he knew Hanson

'They had been warned that it would be very difficult, one local bushman describing it as "a complicated form of suicide".'

from McKillops Bridge to the junction with the Buchan River. This section of the Snowy winds through remote country and drops over rapids with names such as Georges Mistake, the Washing Machine and the ironically named Gentle Annie. Even experienced canoeists are forced to portage some of the rapids. But it is child's play compared to some parts of the river that Hunt and Hanson tackled.

Hunt prepared carefully for their adventure. He tried various condensed and dried foods and decided to take rice, potatoes, dried onions, powdered tomatoes, cakes of dehydrated vegetables and pemmican (strips of dried beef). Like typical bush-

extray seat sewn into his shorts. He ordered thick, knitted socks, and boots with extra-heavy soles, fitted with ankle protectors and made from vegetable-tanned leather which is less affected by water.

All the gear and food were packed in small, labelled, waterproof bags which were then packed in four waterproof kitbags. The kitbags were labelled Personal, Ironmongery (including billies and guns), Tucker and Bread. Everything was then put in a large canvas bag and strapped into the canoe. This proved to be secure—even when the canoe capsized they didn't lose any gear.

The canoe, made of pine, was 3.5 metres long and weighed 45 kilograms. It had done

well enough to spend a few weeks together in remote country. In the *Sydney Mail* article Hunt said, 'I knew Stan would stick. He was a good bushman, knew boats and had a useful knowledge of prospecting. I knew enough of his faults and he knew enough of mine to make me think that we would have a reasonable chance of getting along together.' For most of the trip Hunt paddled in the back and Hanson, who had never canoed before, was in the front.

I spoke to Hanson's son, Peter Hanson, who still lives at Nowra for half the year when he isn't looking for opals near Lightning Ridge. He told me that his father's occupations included fisherman and SP bookmaker. In 1937 he was a hire-car operator,

from his back. Hanson was reluctant to go to a hospital in case he wouldn't be allowed to finish the trip. Fortunately, after the carbuncle was removed his back felt much better.

Hanson was fond of snakes, which caused Hunt some consternation at times. Hunt describes the scene when he picked up Hanson. 'He was standing by a large kitbag (with) a very lively copperhead snake... Handling and playing with snakes is one of Stan's favourite pastimes, but I like playing with them with a gun.' On another occasion Hanson found a brown snake and proceeded to tease it. When it struck at him he would hit it across the head with his hat. He then picked it up and played with it. As

them as they took a nap under a bridge. After Jindabyne, the Snowy flows south-east through sparsely settled country to Ironmungy. At first the going was easy but it wasn't long before they were running rapids and portaging round rocky sections. They were careful to have a good look at each rapid before deciding whether to paddle it, rope the canoe through or portage it. The pair were to do many portages on the trip but seem to have accepted that they were the price of conquering the river. Hunt wrote: 'I think one of the fascinations of canoeing lies in the fact that each difficulty encountered has to be studied and overcome by different means.' They must have worked hard over the next couple of weeks.



Canoeists portaging Gentle Annie rapid on the Snowy in more recent times. Peter Hogan

owning a Buick and a Cadillac. Hanson had six children. He died in 1978 aged 84.

When he was 17 Hanson survived being shot in the back. Doctors stitched him up but expected him to die. He lived but needed a belt a foot wide to keep himself together. 'Since then,' wrote Hunt in the *Sydney Mail* article, 'he has fallen over a 200-foot cliff and escaped with a few broken ribs, has been nearly drowned twice, been bitten three times by various species of snakes and won a boxing tournament. So the shot did not affect him to any great extent.' During the trip Hanson's back gave him trouble and he had to be carted to Dalgety on the back of a truck, where a bush nurse removed a carbuncle. This was after a bloke they met on the river had attempted to open him up with a razor blade. Despite the pain

soon as Hanson put it down Hunt killed it with a large rock, which did not please Hanson.

The amount of wildlife seen by the two canoeists is amazing. Hunt reported seeing kangaroos, wallabies, dingoes, wombats, emus, brumbies and goats. They saw 'thousands of black ducks' and also lyre-birds and wonga pigeons. They caught perch by trailing a spinner in deep pools. Trout were plentiful and fairly easy to catch although they were disappointed that the biggest was only about two pounds (just under a kilogram). On the second night they camped by a long, wide pool which was dotted with the fury backs of platypus. Canoeists today are not so fortunate.

The journey started with an undignified retreat from local boys throwing stones at

The *Canoeing Guide to Victoria* describes the section above the MacLaughlin River as 'just too steep and has too many portages to be worth while'.

Hanson and the canoe nearly came to grief while negotiating the first gorge. They needed to get round a big rapid with a drop of over five metres and found themselves on the wrong side of the river. With the rope tied around his chest and Hanson hanging firmly on the other end at a point upstream, Hunt allowed himself to be swept across the river. Hunt then hung on to the rope to haul the canoe, with Hanson hanging on the back, across to his side. But Hunt had too much rope: he just managed to haul it in to save Hanson and the canoe from being swept by the strong current over the drop on to the rocks below.

The next day they had their first big portage. After setting up camp that evening Hanson returned from shooting rabbits for the pot with the news that the gorge lower down looked impassable. A narrow channel passed through sheer walls and the river dropped over difficult rapids and small falls. As the river curved round a ridge behind their camp-site it looked as if they would have to haul canoe and gear over the ridge. Hunt wasn't too keen on this plan. They took

The Snowy River today

The Snowy River starts at 2100 metres above sea level a couple of kilometres south of Mt Kosciuszko. It is dammed at Guthega, Island Bend and Jindabyne. The Jindabyne dam is the last dam on the Snowy River and was completed in 1967. Until recently, from one to three per cent of the previous flow was released into the river. This will be increased to 25 per cent over the next five years. Water from the Island Bend Pondage, which collects the snow melt from the upper reaches of the Snowy River, is also diverted to the Murray and Tumut River catchment areas. There is also a dam on the Eucumbene River, a major tributary of the Snowy which flows into Lake Jindabyne. At Jindabyne the river is 960 metres above sea level and flows for over 450 kilometres to the sea. Major tributaries below Jindabyne are the MacLaughlin, Delegate, Jacobs and Pinch Rivers in NSW and the Suggan Buggan, Little, Rodgers and Buchan Rivers in Victoria.

The river passes through three National Parks: the Kosciuszko National Park in NSW, the Alpine National Park (Tingaringy section) in northern Victoria and the Snowy River National Park also in Victoria. The southern part of the Kosciuszko National Park and much of the Snowy River National Park are classified as wilderness areas.

After Jindabyne there are only four road bridges over the river: at Dalgety and Ironmungy in NSW, McKillops Bridge in northern Victoria and the Princes Highway at Orbost.

some of the gear to the top of the ridge the next morning and then had a closer inspection. This showed that they could get the canoe through with several smaller portages. However, there were no camp-sites in the gorge so they would have to get through that day. Most of the morning had gone before they got back to camp and made a start. They worked the rest of the day without stopping to rest or to eat. At two points they had to haul the canoe and gear 30 metres over rocks and lower it all down on ropes. Cold, wet, tired and hungry, they got through the gorge just before dusk.

After the trip Hunt told the *Goulburn Evening Post*: 'The roughest part of the river was between Ironmungy and the junction of

the MacLaughlin River.' Expecting to do it in a couple of days, it actually took them nine. After a day that required a few portages they camped by a pool and walked up a hill to look at what they had to face the next day. Hunt describes the scene: 'The sight that greeted our eyes was very much worse than the gorge above Dalgety. We saw a deep narrow chasm through which the river boiled and foamed between a tumbled mass of boulders. There were no pools of any description; all we could see were rocks and broken water, and the sullen roar made us wonder just how long the trip would take...It was the roughest stretch I'd seen on any river.'

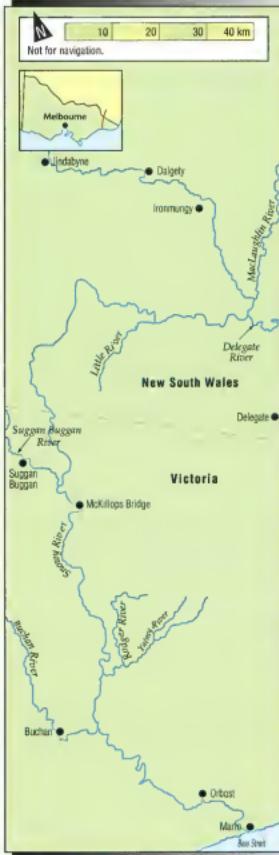
It took several portages to get through that section of the river, including one of about half a mile (800 metres). Some of the gear was carried to the end where they would camp that night. They were able to rope the canoe through a few bits but most

of the day was spent carrying gear and canoe. It was one of the hardest days of the trip. Hunt again: 'The lower end of the gorge was completely blocked with huge boulders and we could catch only occasional glimpses of the water as it forced its way beneath that tangled barrier.'

The next few days were not much better. They worked from sunrise to sundown doing portage after portage, averaging about one-and-a-half kilometres a day, rarely able actually to paddle the canoe. 'It was a canoeist's nightmare,' said Hunt. At times the river actually went underground. Just before the MacLaughlin River is a feature called the Stone Bridge, which was used by Aborigines as a natural crossing place.

After the Delegate River joins the Snowy River it heads north-west into what is now the Kosciuszko National Park. It winds through almost inaccessible mountain country, changing direction nearly 180° during its journey before heading south to Victoria. This is still very remote wilderness country which very

Snowy River



Stanley Hanson charms a member of the local population of brown snakes.

few canoeists have tackled. Canoeists grade rapids on a scale of 1 to 6, with grade 4 described as 'Suitable only for very competent canoeists'. The *Canoeing Guide* tells us: 'From the Delegate River on there are very many rapids of Grade 3-4 standard with several portages. There are two waterfalls... (which)

are not canoeable by anyone at any level and must be approached with extreme caution.'

The first of these waterfalls is the Corrowong Falls, where two big drops and some fast rapids drop the river about 20 metres. Hunt and Hanson found a reasonably easy portage along the old riverbed. Along the way they encountered a few snakes, Hanson—but not Hunt—was pleased to see them.

They had some pleasant and easy paddling for a while and soon after the falls came to a spot where they had arranged a food pick-up. A walk, lasting an hour and a half, took them to the camp of a local farmer, where they were showered with hospitality.

about 1200 metres of jagged shale and boulders on the left bank. They did it in four stages and were exhausted by the end of the day, every muscle in their bodies aching.

Although the surrounding country was wild and inhospitable, the river itself was easier after the falls. There were not many portages and they became more daring at shooting the rapids, which resulted in a couple of duckings. At times they had to drag the canoe over long stretches of shallow water. But they were fit and were having a great time. After turning in a great arc the river heads south to the Victorian border. Before they reached the border they un-

scribing it as 'a complicated form of suicide'. They had also been warned that it would be almost impossible to walk out because of the thick scrub. But they were undeterred.

Getting through the gorge was one of the worst days of the trip. There were three portages and the slippery conditions made them more difficult. Hunt wrote: 'Certainly it was rough but not as rough as it had been higher up. It was the rain that made it so

'It looked like the embodiment of a mad canoeist's nightmare.'



Arthur Hunt, left, and Stanley Hanson on the Snowy River in 1937.

It was from here that Hanson was taken to Dalgety to have his carbuncle cut out.

Returning from Dalgety, they hiked to one of the highest points in the area to survey the next section of the river. The scene was daunting. Hunt wrote: 'It looked like the embodiment of a mad canoeist's nightmare. Surely the Creator of the Universe must have raked together all the spare, rough mountain ranges, gorges and boulders into one vast heap, meaning to level them out when He had nothing more important on hand.' The thought of getting out of the area if anything happened weighed on their minds. They were aware of stories of prospectors going into the area and never being heard of again and that surveyor TS Townsend in 1846 had found it impossible to proceed along this section of river.

But they continued on to the next obstacle, the second waterfall. Hunt called these the Little River Falls but the Little River (in NSW) is now called Byadbo Creek. From the top of the falls they saw a drop of about ten metres and a difficult rapid. This was followed by a series of rock-strewn, narrow channels that they would also have to portage. The right bank of the river was too steep for a portage so it had to be over

expectedly met a party of surveyors—and a bit later a gang blazing a track which was to become the Barry Way, a road connecting the Monaro and East Gippsland. As usual when they met people on the river, they enjoyed the hospitality and company of the men.

As they approached the Victorian border the weather tested their hardness. The wind and driving rain kept them constantly cold. Sometimes they stopped to light a fire to thaw out. At other times they dragged the canoe along a beach to get their muscles working properly.

They crossed the border and soon reached McKillops Bridge. A few years before, a huge flood had wrecked the newly constructed steel bridge but a new bridge had been built when the pair arrived. The twisted remains of the old bridge testified to the power of the river in flood.

A couple of days were spent at the bridge as they needed to get more food from Delgate and the canoe needed some repairs. Once again, the hospitality of the locals was generous.

The next challenge was the Tulloch Ard Gorge. They had been warned that it would be very difficult, one local bushman de-

unpleasant; the rain, the cold and the slippery rocks.' However, more confident of their skills, they were shooting rapids that earlier they would have roped the canoe down.

Soon they saw cleared paddocks and signs of civilisation. Perhaps surprisingly, Hunt reported that he began to miss the peace and serenity of communing with nature. At Orbost they stayed overnight at a local hotel before continuing on to Marlo the next day. News of their progress down the river preceded them and the people of Marlo turned out to greet them. The *Bairnsdale Advertiser* reported that the owner of the Marlo Hotel offered them a week's free accommodation. However, the pair declined the offer.

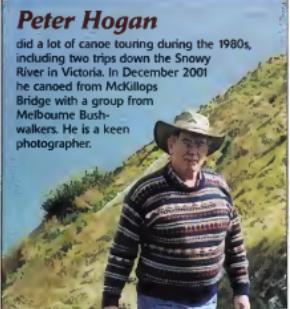
Their canoe had just made it. There were dozens of cracks in the timber and some of the planks were almost worn through from being dragged over rocks. Hunt considered the canoe to be beyond repair, but he had it transported back to Goulburn.

The following year the River Canoe Club of NSW made Arthur Hunt and Stanley Hanson honorary members of the club.

Thank you to Gordon Thompson of the Goulburn Historical Society; Peter Hanson, son of Stanley Hanson; and Ross Winters of the River Canoe Club of NSW for help with research for the article.

Peter Hogan

did a lot of canoe touring during the 1980s, including two trips down the Snowy River in Victoria. In December 2001 he canoed from McKillops Bridge with a group from Melbourne Bush-walkers. He is a keen photographer.



The living Centre

Images of the outback, by *Sandy Scheltema*



*Above, the Bungle Bungles. Right, boab tree.
All photos were taken in Western Australia.*

Sandy Scheltema lives in Victoria's Wombat Forest where she continues to campaign against wood-chipping. A photojournalist for 20 years, her work has led her to Africa, India, Burma and many places in between. On rare occasions she visits quiet, wild places where she enjoys setting up her tripod and photographing the peace.





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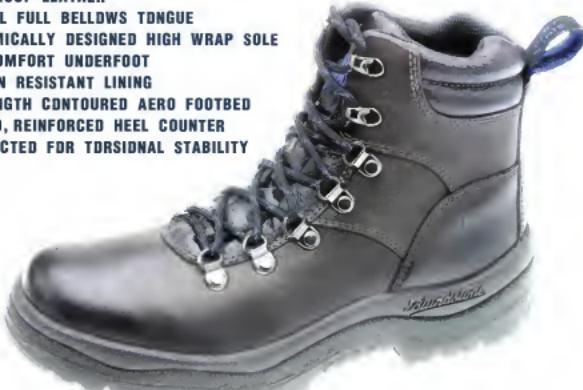
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The Walls of Jerusalem

A Tasmanian paradise of peaks and lakes, by *John Chapman*



THE CENTRAL PLATEAU OF TASMANIA IS A myriad of lakes and shallow valleys. On the western edge of the plateau a series of higher peaks and deeper valleys are known as the Walls of Jerusalem because of their long cliff-lines. The Walls are popular with bushwalkers from all parts of the globe as the deeper valleys provide welcome shelter from the sometimes bleak weather and on fine days the cliff-lined peaks provide stunning backdrops for the many lakes. In addition, the Walls contain the largest known stand of pencil pines in the State. It is easy to spend a few days in the Walls enjoying the many peaks and lakes.

The area was declared a National Park in 1981 and extended in 1989. There has been much track damage in the park and today many of the tracks are either hardened or boardwalks. Walkers should keep to the marked routes and well-used camp-sites to prevent further degradation of this beautiful area.

The Walls AT A GLANCE

Grade	Easy-moderate
Length	Two-three days
Type	Two-day circuit with optional side-trips to mountains and lakes
Region	Central Plateau, Tasmania
Nearest town	Devonport or Deloraine
Start/finish	Walls of Jerusalem track near Lake Rowallan
Map	Walls of Jerusalem National Park 1:25 000
Best time	Summer, early autumn
Special points	Fuel-stove-only area. National Park pass required

When to go

The park is accessible all year round. As for all Tasmanian highland walks, you must be equipped for wet and cold conditions at any time of the year.

The most popular times are summer and early autumn when the weather is at its best with many warm days. However, storms still sweep through at this time and you must expect some poor weather. Winter has short daylight hours and brings snow to the peaks. In ideal conditions ski touring is possible although generally the snow cover in the valleys is sporadic and soft. Winter is for very experienced walkers only. Spring is generally the windiest season but with lengthen-

ing days and wild flowers it is an interesting time of year for experienced walkers. On some trips you will experience all conditions no matter the season.

Access

The closest major town is Devonport. Follow the B12 south for 33 kilometres through Sheffield to Gowrie Park. Continue south-west towards Cradle Mountain for a further 7.4 kilometres, then turn left on to the C138. Follow this winding road south for 21 kilometres, then turn right on to the C171 towards Lake Rowallan and the Walls of Jerusalem. It is also possible to approach the C171 from Deloraine by Mole Creek.

Continue following the main gravel road, ignoring side roads, for 22.6 kilometres to cross Fish River. Turn left 100 metres past the bridge and a further kilometre leads to a side road on the right and the car park. In recent years a number of cars left here have been burgled so don't leave valuables in vehicles.

The walk

From the car park, follow the well-used walking track south-east into forest. Sign in at the information shelter and continue climbing through dense forest. A solid one-hour climb leads to Trappers Hut. Summer grazing and animal trapping were customary at the Walls long before the area became

popular with walkers, and part of this history has been preserved at Trappers Hut. The original hut was built in the 1940s for drying skins taken from trapped animals. The present building is of a design similar to the original and was constructed in 1989-90. Some interesting display panels about the hut's history are inside. It is only a shelter and not suitable for overnight stops.

From the hut a five-minute climb leads south to a track junction. The return walk will be along the track on the right. Keep to the left heading towards the Walls and continue gently climbing on to a high, rocky ridge covered with light timber. From here there are views of the peaks of the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park to the west. The steeper climbing is over now and a delightful walk along a high, rocky ridge leads south-east to the tarns of Solomons Jewels. The track has been moved further west than shown on existing maps and only passes close to the shore of one of the tarns.

A short descent then leads into the open valley of Wild Dog Creek. Above and ahead is the glacial-carved, U-shaped entrance to the Walls called Herods Gate. Cross the valley on the boardwalk and climb steeply on a timbered track through scrub. There are a number of tent platforms and a toilet to the right of the track that make a good, early overnight stop.

At the top of the pass at Herods Gate is a wonderful view of Lake Salome and the

Walls of Jerusalem



Solomons Throne from Jaffa Vale.

John Chapman

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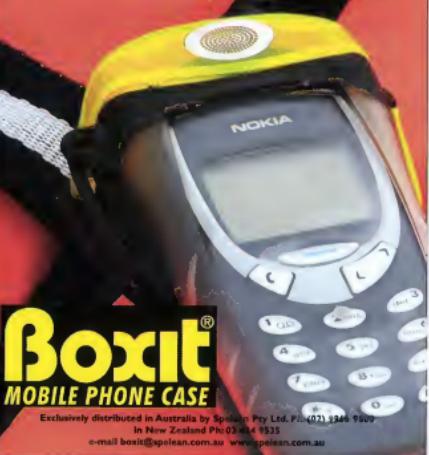
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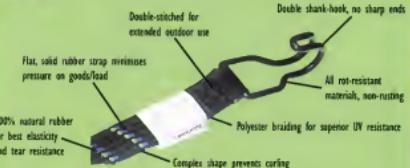
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surrounding ring of peaks. To reduce damage to the delicate alpine plants, follow the timbered track south-east across the open valley. The route follows the base of King Davids Peak, then across the flat plain for 1.5 kilometres to a track junction. The side-track to the left leads 100 metres to the Pool of Bethesda. It is suggested not to camp here as the site has been degraded from overuse.

From the Pool of Bethesda junction the main track climbs south-east for ten minutes into a saddle called Damascas Gate. Two sidetracks join in the saddle.

From Damascas Gate, continue by following the timbered track south-east into a pine forest. This is the largest known stand of pencil pines in Tasmania—many of the trees are very large, sheltering a grassy floor. Descend gently through this wonderful forest to Dixons Kingdom Hut on its eastern edge. This is a good overnight stop with plenty of gently sloping, grassy tent-sites. The hut is low and not an ideal overnight shelter. Water should be collected from creeks in the valley east of the hut. The spectacular and memorable day's walk of ten kilometres should take around four-and-a-half to five hours, plus side-trips.

Side-trips

The Temple

From Damascas Gate, the track to the left leads to the Temple, and considerable stonework has been done to stabilise the track. The summit provides a good view of the surrounding peaks and many of the lakes. Allow about 50 minutes for the return side-trip.

Solomons Throne (formerly Halls Buttress)

The track to the right from Damascas Gate climbs towards Solomons Throne. A very steep climb zigzags up scree slopes, and some amazing stonework has been done to create a stepped track. This leads round to the south and climbs a short, rocky slot to the plateau behind Solomons Throne. Follow the rim of the plateau 150 metres north to the summit. This exposed rocky peak has excellent views of the area. The return trip should take around 40 to 60 minutes depending on your fitness—it is a steep climb!

Mt Jerusalem

From Dixons Kingdom, follow the timbered track north into the open saddle of Jaffa Gate. Here the track swings east crossing the saddle, then climbs on to a low plateau. A short descent follows, then a steady climb following the ridge leads north-east to the rocky summit of Mt Jerusalem. The sharp summit has good views, particularly of the stark Central Plateau to the east. The return walk should take around one-and-a-half hours.

Other side-trips

There is delightful off-track walking to the north of Jaffa Gate. A full day can be spent

visiting the northern lakes of Lake Sidon, Lake Thor and Lake Tyre. The valleys are generally open and provide easy walking with the ridges covered in low, scrubby forest. To prevent tracks forming, no particular route will be provided and you should fan out in the area. Do not plan on returning by Ephraims Gate as there is unpleasantly thick scrub lurking in the valley north-east of the Gate.

Day two

From Dixons Kingdom, follow pads south-east into the open valley of Jaffa Vale. There isn't a marked track but the pads soon become better defined as they swing right and follow a wide, grassy lead south. Continue gently descending south across the open valley for one kilometre to the top edge of a pine forest. Here the track divides several times. Keep to the left each time, to descend through a small patch of forest, then cross a creek. An open walk then heads south along a well-defined track passing along the eastern edge of the forest.

At the southern edge of the forest, leave the track and walk west across the grass. Continue across thick snow grass west, then south-west round the edge of the open plain to the shore of Lake Ball, about one hour from Dixons Kingdom. A track marker on a stake indicates the start of a well-marked track along the northern shore of Lake Ball.

Follow this track south-west for 20 minutes over a rocky ridge to descend to a hut ruin above the lake shore. The hut does not provide shelter and there are some campsites nearby in the forest.

From the hut, continue following the well-defined track west. This passes through tall scrub and climbs over some rocky ridges with good views of Lake Ball, then descends to the open plain at the western end of Lake Ball, one hour from the hut ruin.

Cross the northern side of the plain and head north-west into a timbered saddle. A steep, rocky descent then leads down to the open plain at the northern end of Lake Adelaide.

Turn right and follow the well-defined track north-west then north for three kilometres to the small lake east of Stretcher Lake. The track continues north into scrubby heathland as it passes west of Lake Leone. North of Lake Leone the track braids several times as it approaches the main Walls of Jerusalem track—generally keen to the right and away from the boggy gully. Climb briefly to the track junction, two hours from Lake Adelaide.

Turn left and descend for five minutes to Trappers Hut. From the hut the last hour is a reverse of the first morning, following the main track back to the car park. The 13 kilometre day takes about six or seven hours' walking and is another particularly memorable day.

Bushwalking writer John Chapman has been contributing to *Wild* since issue one. His favourite place is still Tasmania although he regularly visits all other Australian States.

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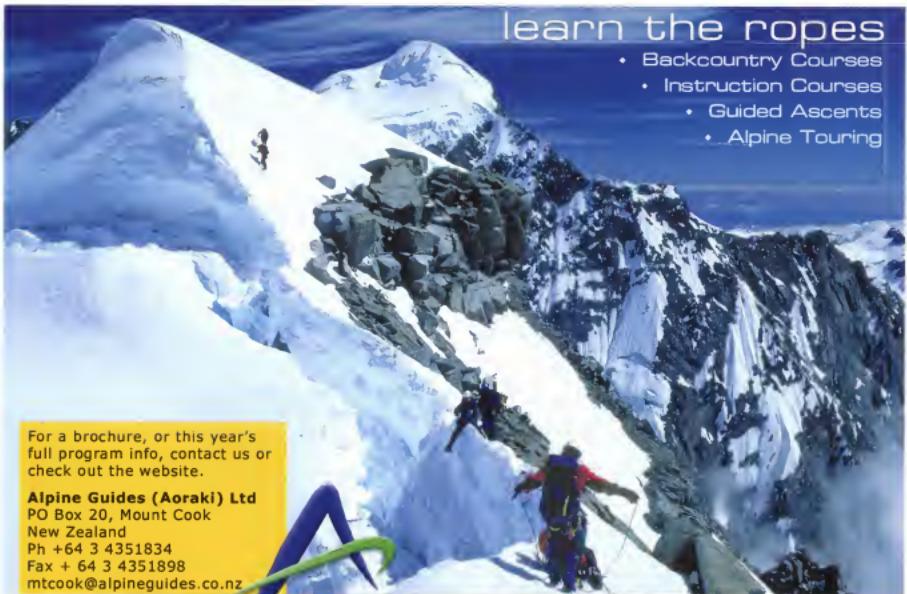
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Rucksacks for bushwalking

Jim Graham shoulders the load

Wild Gear Surveys: What they are and what they're not

The purpose of *Wild* Gear Surveys is to assist readers in purchasing specialist outdoors equipment of the quality and with the features most appropriate for their needs; and to save them time and money in the process.

The cost of 'objective' and meaningful testing is beyond the means not only of *Wild*, but of the Australian outdoors industry in general and we are not aware of such testing being regularly carried out by an outdoors magazine anywhere in the world. Similarly, given the number of products involved, field testing is beyond the means of Australia's outdoors industry. *Wild* Gear Surveys summarise information, collate and present it in a convenient and readily comparable form, with guidelines and advice to assist in the process of wise equipment selection.

Surveyors are selected for their knowledge of the subject and their impartiality. Surveys are checked and verified by an independent referee, and reviewed by *Wild*'s editorial staff. Surveys are based on the items' availability and specifications at the time of the relevant issue's production; ranges and specifications may change later. Before publication each manufacturer/distributor is sent a summary of the surveyor's findings regarding the specifications of their products for verification.

Some aspects of surveys, such as the assessment of value and features—and especially the inclusion/exclusion of certain products—entail a degree of subjective judgement on the part of the surveyor, the referee and *Wild*, space being a key consideration.

'Value' is based primarily upon price relative to features and quality. A product with more elaborate or specialised features may be rated more highly by someone whose main concern is not price.

An important criterion for inclusion is 'wide availability'. To qualify, a product must usually be stocked by a number of specialist outdoors shops in the central business districts of the major Australian cities. With the recent proliferation of brands and models, and the constant ebb and flow of their availability, 'wide availability' is becoming an increasingly difficult concept to pin down.

Despite these efforts to achieve accuracy, impartiality, comprehensiveness and usefulness, no survey is perfect. Apart from the obvious human elements that may affect assessment, the quality, materials and specifications of any product may vary markedly from batch to batch and even from sample to sample. It is ultimately the responsibility of readers to determine what is best for their particular circumstances and for the use they have in mind for gear reviewed.



Michael Hampton found it necessary to choose between a good rucksack and trousers on his ski trip to the Snowy Mountains, New South Wales. Greg Caire

THIS SURVEY CONSIDERS RUCKSACKS SUITABLE for use on walks of two or more days. It is intended to provide an idea of the range and types of packs currently available.

Best suited for

The scope of this survey begins with two-day or weekend bushwalks (W) then moves up to multiday bushwalks of three to five days (E) and longer than five days (E+). The

recommendations provided should be used as a guide for walkers with typical gear requirements. Lightweight enthusiasts may be able to downsize their pack selections. The governing principle in pack selection should be to purchase a model with sufficient capacity to contain all your gear, food and water requirements for the longest trip you are likely to undertake. On shorter trips compression-straps can be cinched up to reduce the pack's internal and external dimensions.

Rucksacks for bushwalking

		Best suited for *	Volume, litres *	Weight, grams *	Back lengths available **	Main material	Internal compartments	Harness	Durability	Water resistance	Value	Comments	Avg price, \$	
Berghaus China www.berghaus.com		◀ Akamus	W/E	70-75	2250	1	Synthetic	2	***	***½	**	***½	Pack-away rain cover. Women's model available	220
Black Wolf China														
		Granite Peak 1	W/E	60-75	2400-2600	3	Synthetic	2	***	***½	**	***½	Pack-away rain cover	279
Deuter Vietnam www.velovita.com.au		◀ Aircontact 65+10	W/E	75	2750	1	Synthetic	2	***	***½	***½	***½	Hydration-system compatible. Also available in slim profile	400
Fairydown China www.fairydown.co.nz		◀ Terra Nova	E+	75-85	2300-2500	3	Synthetic	1	***½	***	***	***		400
		Endeavour	E	65-75	2300-2500	3	Canvas	2	***½	****	***½	***½	Side hydration-pocket. Women's fit available	450
		Phoenix	E+	80-90	2600-2800	3	Canvas	2	***½	****	***½	***½	Women's fit available	530
Karrimor China www.karrimor.co.uk		◀ Cougar 1	W/E	60-85	2600-2750	1	Synthetic	1	***	***	***	***½	Excellent warranty. Women's fit available	369
		Jaguar 1	E	70-95	2925-3250	1	Synthetic	2	***½	***	***	***½	As above	449
Kathmandu China www.kathmandu.com.au		◀ Vanguard	E	65-75	2200-2400	2	Synthetic	1	***½	***	***½	***	Interchangeable add-ons	440
		Vardo	E	75-80	2200-2400	2	Synthetic	2	***½	***	***	***	As above	480
Macpac New Zealand www.macpac.co.nz		Traverse	W/E	60-70	2500-2700	3	Canvas	2	***	****	***½	****	Also available in women's model (Esprit)	400
		Glissade	E	70-80	2900-3000	4	Canvas	2	***½	****	***½	***½	Women's fit available	500
		◀ Cascade	E+	85-95	2900-3100	4	Canvas	2	***½	****	***½	***½	As above	540
Mont Fiji www.mont.com.au		Monolith	E+	80-85	2800	2	Canvas	1	***	***½	***½	***½		390
		◀ Backcountry	E+	80-85	2850	2	Canvas	2	***	***½	***	***½		430
		Talus	E	75-85	3300	3	Canvas	2	***	***½	***	***	Zip-off day pack for side-trips	450
Mountain Designs China www.mountaindesigns.com		Bbuluhun	E	65-75	2700	2	Synthetic	2	***½	***	***½	***		300
		Main Range	E	65-75	2650	2	Canvas	2	***	***½	***½	***½		450
		◀ Foxlite 1	E	50-80	2200	3	Synthetic	1	***½	***½	***½	***½		550

Rucksacks for bushwalking continued

		Best suited for *	Volume, litres *	Weight, grams	Back lengths ** available	Main material	Internal compartments	Harness	Durability	Water resistance	Value	Comments	Avg. price, \$
One Planet Australia	www.1planet.com.au												
	Styx 1	E	65-75	2100	2	Synthetic	1	****	****	****	****		330
►	Strededku	E	70-90	2700	3	Canvas	2	****	****	****½	****	Women's fit available. Canvas binding	500
	Expedition	E+	80-100	2800	2	Canvas	1	****	****	****	****	As above	510
Osprey	www.ospreypacks.com												
	Luna 1	W/E	65-75	2960	3	Synthetic	2	****	****	****½	****½	Designed for women. Carbon composite frame stays	579
►	Crescent 1	E	90-110	3250	3	Synthetic	2	****	****	****½	****½	Titanium frame stays	699
Pitch Black Australia	www.pitchblack.com.au												
	Minto	W/E	60-70	2400-2700	2	Synthetic	1	***	***½	****	***	Totally waterproof main sack. Hydration-system compatible	360
►	Mawson	E+	80-90	3200-3500	2	Synthetic	1	***	***½	****	**	As above	620
Snowgum	www.snowgum.com.au												
	Hiker II	W/E	65-75	2500-2700	2	Synthetic	2	**½	**	**	**½	Includes nylon pack-cover	280
Tatonka	www.tatonka.com												
	Apex 60	W/E	60-65	2100	1	Synthetic	2	**½	**	**	***		220
►	Kimberley 70	E	70-80	2700	1	Synthetic	2	***	**½	**½	***		300
►	Katanga 80	E+	80-90	3350	1	Synthetic	2	**½	**½	***	**½	Hydration-system compartment. Weatherproof zippers	380
The North Face	www.thenorthface.com												
	Badlands 11	E	65-75	2555-2610	2	Synthetic	2	***	***	**½	**½	Hydration-system compatible. Removable lid	500
White Mountain	www.whitemountain.com.au												
	Basecamp 11	E	65-75	2650	2	Synthetic	2	***	**	**½	***		220
	Man Peak 11	E	65-75	2650	2	Synthetic	2	***	**½	**½	***½		240
Wilderness Equipment	www.wild-equipment.com.au												
	Discovery 1	E	65-80	2500	4	Canvas	1	****½	****	****	****	Narrow profile. Removable lid. Range of harness shapes	380
►	Discovery 2	E	65-80	2700	4	Canvas	2	****½	****	****½	****	As above	400
	Expedition 1	E+	80-95	2700	4	Canvas	1	****½	****	****	****	Removable lid. Range of harness shapes	420

* Best suited for: W weekend trips, E extended walks of up to five days, E+ extended walks of more than five days. * Volume, Weight: Where more than one size of a model is available, the smallest and largest rucksack volume and weight are given. Where only one weight is supplied for packs with multiple back lengths it refers to the smallest listed capacity. ** Back lengths available: Number of back lengths in which the pack is offered. All the packs surveyed allow for adjustments to the back length of the harness. † Not seen by surveyor. ‡ Not seen by referee. ● poor, ●● average, ●●● good, ●●●● excellent. The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made.

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Volume

The volume figures are provided by manufacturers or importers and are unverified for this survey. In comparing the various models in the table it was interesting to note the amount of usable space in packs designated to hold identical volumes. Quoted sizes should only be used to prepare a short list from which a more informed decision can be made. The final choice should be governed by how well the actual volumes allow for the distribution of your typical kit. As a guide, walkers restricting the use of their pack to two-day walks only should be short-listing models with a capacity of around 60 litres. Walkers who may venture up to multiday journeys of less than five days may need to add a further 10–15 litres to these figures. If expeditions of five days or more are on the cards, models with a capacity of 80 litres and above should be targeted. This also depends on the season—winter walking you need bulkier clothing and sleeping-bag, while in summer lightweight packing is possible.

Weight

Most packs in the survey ranged between two and three kilograms, with some of the larger-capacity, fully-featured models edging above the three kilogram mark. Weights are provided by the manufacturer or distributor. The slight variations in weight for packs of similar internal volumes should not be a major consideration in reaching a final decision. Too many times I have seen walkers compromise pack volume for considerations of weight. When time comes for the walk they end up with bulky gear strapped to the outside of the pack. It often comes back damaged.

Back lengths available

All the packs included in this survey have harnesses that allow adjustment for variations in back length. However, these adjustments can only provide for relatively small back-length differences. To cater for the range of back lengths within our population, manufacturers make packs, and harnesses, of different lengths. In most cases specialist outdoors retailers have expert staff who can measure your back length to determine the most suitable pack and harness length. It is worth noting that the volume of a model may vary according to the length required. For one model in particular, four back lengths are specified, providing three different total volumes.

Main material

For simplicity, pack fabrics have been designated as either synthetic or canvas. In fact the canvas packs in this survey also use synthetic materials in specific high-wear areas such as the base. There is a range of different synthetic fibres on the market with each having its own trade name and extravagant claims. All synthetic fibres require a

waterproof layer to be bonded to the inner surface of the fabric to prevent water penetration. Unfortunately, these layers break down over time and delaminate allowing water to penetrate the pack fabric. The waterproofness of canvas is to some extent derived from the capacity of its threads to swell when wet and thus fill any 'gaps'. Many Australasian manufacturers prefer canvas because of its durable waterproof qualities. Traditionally the trade-off has been extra weight, especially when wet. However, modern canvas now blends together cotton and polyester, impregnated with extra waterproofing agents, to achieve a lower finished

Buy right

- Sizing rule: You can make a large pack smaller but you can't make a small pack larger. Consider your requirements carefully. Experienced walkers know their kit and should already have an idea of their volume requirements. Beginners should consult specialist outdoors retailers to determine their other equipment needs and then try that equipment in a pack.
- Fill the pack: Try your tent, sleeping-bag and sleeping-mat in a typical pack. Consider the amount of room left and decide whether or not there is enough space for water, clothing, first aid and food for the type of trips you are likely to take. Consider also the volume of pockets for carrying additional items such as wet-weather gear, maps, compass, torch...
- Short list: Once your volume needs have been determined make a short list of the packs that meet your other criteria.
- Fitting: Have a specialist outdoors retailer assess your back length and fit a weighted pack to your back. Check the harness for fit, weight distribution, pressure points and comfort. Use a mirror to check your posture. You should be able to stand almost upright.

weight with the same strength properties. In most cases the finished canvas incorporates a Ripstop pattern for even greater strength and durability. Canvas is generally less abrasion resistant than synthetic materials, which is worth considering for use in rocky environments.

Internal compartments

A trade-off exists between the number of internal compartments and performance on two important criteria: durability and water resistance. Dual-compartment packs generally allow greater access to your gear by introducing an additional zippered access point. However, this depends on the design of the entry zip and shape of the compartment—it can be almost impossible to get gear out of the bottom compartment of a full pack. Unfortunately, this zip provides another water-entry point and another zipper and flap that can eventually tear or break.

Harness

One of the most important considerations when purchasing a pack is how comfortably the harness can distribute load to the body. Any excess loading to the shoulders or hips, or pressure points caused by ill-fitting straps, will result in extreme discomfort and premature fatigue during a bushwalk. Improperly loaded muscles will go into spasm, leading to aches, functional posture problems, reduced flexibility and excessive loading to specific regions of the spine. The ratings applied to the harnesses reflect how well each is able to distribute load to key weight-bearing surfaces. Higher ratings are given to designs with shoulder-straps that contour evenly and without bunching when applied to curved surfaces, and waist-belts with stiffened sides to prevent sagging under load. The shape and function of the lumbar pad was a key consideration as was the ease of adjusting the harness to provide proper fit. Women's harnesses generally conform better to the female anatomy, making load distribution more effective. They usually have different cuts and lengths of hip-belts, and different shoulder-strap positions, as well as different harness back-lengths. These are key criteria that can be used by any well-informed person in the selection process. Comfort of the harness is a more subjective assessment based on how well a harness can match an individual's body shape and size. Having a pack properly fitted by experienced personnel is imperative to long-term satisfaction and I cannot stress that too highly.

Durability

Packs that incorporate highly durable fabrics, or multiple fabric layers, in high-wear areas are rated more highly on this criterion. The laminates or coatings used for water resistance on nylon and polyester pack fabrics were examined and compared with the known durability of the hydrophilic properties of canvas. The quality of stitching, reinforcement points and zips are also reflected in the durability rating.

Water resistance

Simplicity of design is often best when it comes to water resistance. The more seams, flaps and zips, the more potential sites for water entry. Most of the packs in the table are top-access designs with draw-cord throats and either one or two large compartments. Single-compartment packs don't require the lower zip and hence benefit from one less potential water entry point. From experience, canvas continues to resist water entry better and longer than alternate fabrics and I prefer it as the main material in bushwalking packs. It is interesting to note that two Australian manufacturers have taken unique approaches to further enhance water resistance. One uses canvas as a binding material on all internal seams and the other, Pitch Black, uses a waterproof fabric as the main material. However, no pack is completely water impermeable, with the exception of the Pitch Black waterproof, roll-top bag series. It is advisable always to use a pack liner if going into very wet regions.

Value

The value rating is a subjective assessment of how well the pack can be expected to perform on typical bushwalks, balanced by its recommended retail price. Through my role as an outdoor educator and my involvement with two Duke of Edinburgh Award Registered Operating Groups I have been fortunate to have field tested sample products from six of the manufacturers represented in this survey. I believe this experience has increased my ability to select products that represent the best value for my employer's money. Equipment from local companies based in Australia and New Zealand has been consistently excellent.

Approximate price

The prices indicated in this survey are recommended retail prices provided by distributors. In all cases these were verified by ticket prices in retail outlets.

Other brands available

Brand	Distributor	Contact
Arc'teryx	Outdoor Agencies	(02) 9438 2266
Lowe	Intertrek	(02) 9697 3415
Oz Trail	LE Whittaker & Sons	(07) 3279 1800
Salewa	Intertrek	(02) 9697 3415
Vango	Ansco	(03) 9471 1500

Bushwalking packs for outdoor education

One might be excused for thinking that the principles for choosing a bushwalking pack for personal use apply equally for institutional use. 'Why bother giving advice specific to institutions?' you may ask. The same fundamentals of harness fit, durability, water-resistance and value for money apply in outdoor educational settings as well, right? Right you are! However, while individuals may be prepared to forgo a little durability to gain some extra features, the outdoor educator must maximise durability. After all, how often do most recreational walkers use their gear anyway? By contrast, institutional equipment is constantly being used, and abused, in the field. Constant repair jobs on those extra zip entries and pockets are extra stresses that no educator wants. By deleting some of the extra features, pack weight and cost can also be reduced.

Fortunately, a handful of companies have recognised the specific needs of outdoor education institutions and have designed and manufactured suitable products. These products often resemble the mainstream, fully-featured models but have had many of the luxury extras removed. The side pockets, zippered entry points and tool-attachment points are commonly the first to go. What we have left is usually a single-compartment, top-load-

ing, synthetic-reinforced canvas pack with a basic frame and harness and perhaps a single external pocket. Your basic no-frills rucksack!

For those who take teenagers, or adults, into the great outdoors for educational or recreational pursuits I have put together some information that might be useful in the selection of suitable rucksacks. Following these simple guidelines I have short-listed some of the leading institutional packs available at present.

Style

Travel- and hybrid packs tend to have too many bells and whistles to make them suitable for institutional use. They also have a more rounded shape with removable accessories that protrude and shift the centre of gravity further away from the back. Simple bushwalking packs with compression-straps draw the load, and therefore the centre of gravity, closer to the back. In doing so they enhance stability and decrease drag on the shoulders.

Capacity

For most educational purposes suitable packs would enable participants to complete a

walk of up to five days. Duke of Edinburgh Award candidates, for instance, must complete expeditions of between two and four days depending on the award level on which they are working. Packs for two-day (W) or extended (E) bushwalks provide usable volumes of around 60–80 litres and are suitable in situations where equipment is shared between group members. Care should be taken for younger teenagers using large-capacity packs. They tend to feel obliged to fill the pack. Compression straps are very handy in these situations.

Harness

A good harness is an essential item. Here, compromises should be minimised. The harness on an institutional pack should closely replicate those offered on other quality bushwalking packs. Avoid packs with shoulder-straps that don't contour well to weight-bearing surfaces, and waist-belts that deform under loading. Alloy frame stays should be present to transfer loads to the hip region. The harness also needs to allow for back-length adjustments. The adjustment mechanism should be simple and quick to operate but be strong and hold each setting without slipping.



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Rucksacks for outdoor education

	Best suited for *	Volume, liters *	Weight, grams *	Back lengths available **	Main material	Internal compartments	Harness	Durability	Water resistance	Value	Comments	Approx. price, \$ ***	
Macpac New Zealand www.macpac.co.nz	◀ Ravine	E	65–70	1600–1700	2	Synthetic	1	***	***	***	***½	270	
Mont Fiji www.montfiji.com.au	◀ Flyte	E	65–75	1950	3	Synthetic	1	***	***	***	***½	200	
	Flyte canvas	E	65–75	1950	3	Canvas	1	***	***	***	***	270	
Mountain Designs China www.mountaindesigns.com	◀ Tramper	E	60–70	2100	2	Synthetic	1	***	***	***	***½	200	
One Planet Australia www.1planet.com.au §	◀ LePack	E	65–70	1800	2	Synthetic	1	***½	***	***	***	250	
Snowgum Vietnam www.snowgum.com.au	◀ Scout	W	50	1500	1	Synthetic	2	●●½	●●	●●	●●½	Limited to short trips only	120
Wilderness Equipment Vietnam www.wildequipment.com.au	◀ Breakout	E	60–70	2200	2	Canvas	1	***½	****	****	****	Simple and extremely durable. No zips	280

* Best suited for: W weekend trips, E extended walks of up to five days ** Volume, Weight: Where more than one size of a model is available, the smallest and largest rucksack volume and weight are given. Where only one weight is supplied for packs with multiple back lengths it refers to the smallest listed capacity *** Back lengths available: Number of back lengths in which the pack is offered. All the packs surveyed allow for adjustments to the back length of the harness **** Approx. prices: A limit of \$300 (RRP) was set for this table. ● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent § One Planet customises packs for outdoor education use in small numbers, minimum 16 The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

Materials

Canvas is the material of choice for its durability and water resistance. On high-wear areas, such as the base, it needs to be reinforced with an overlay of abrasion-resistant, synthetic material. However, canvas packs are usually more expensive than fully synthetic packs of the same size and features and their price may be beyond the budget. Whatever material is given the nod, it should have a Ripstop pattern (with the exception of Cordura textured nylon) and

be joined by quality stitching. Webbing should be non-slip and bar-tacked to attachment points. Buckles need to be solidly constructed and suitable for smaller fingers if school-age children are to use them. Zips should be minimised and, if they are to be used, must be top-quality sliders.

Compartments

Ideally, institutional packs should just have a single compartment for the main items, and a single expanding pocket for wet-

weather clothing. Such simplicity reduces the chances of dividers, zips and pockets breaking or tearing in the field. Single-compartment packs are also easier when it comes to teaching the correct method of distributing the weight of bulky items.

Amongst scores of unforgettable moments in the outdoors, Jim Graham counts his time near the lip of the Crucible, an alpine lake in New Zealand's Mt Aspiring National Park, as the pick of his highlights. Waist-deep snow, massive mountains, avalanches...what more could you want?

This survey was refereed by Greg Care.

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NSW Bushcraft Equipment, 02 4229 6748; Eastwood Camping Centre, 02 9858 3833;

Mountain Equipment City, 02 9264 5888; Mountain Equipment Chatswood, 02 9419 6955;

Mountain Equipment Hornsby, 02 9477 5467. **NT** Adventure Equipment, 08 8941 0019.

QLD K2 Basecamp, 07 3854 1340; Adventure Equipment Townsville, 07 4775 6116;

Adventure Equipment Cairns, 07 4031 2669; Torre Mountaintech, 07 3870 2699.

TAS Jolly Swagman's Camping World, 03 6234 3999. **VIC** Bogong Equipment, 03 9600 0599;

Mountain Equipment Melbourne, 03 9671 4554; OutSports Frankston, 03 9783 2079;

OutSports Moorabbin, 03 9532 5337; The Wilderness Shop, 03 9898 3742.

WA MainPeak Cottesloe, 08 9385 2552; MainPeak Perth, 08 9322 9044. MainPeak Subiaco, 08 9388 9072.

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Synthetic sleeping-bags

Save a duck, by Scott Edwards

Wild Gear Surveys: What they are and what they're not
(See box on page 55)

IF YOU VISITED AN OUTDOORS SHOP A FEW years ago, sales staff would have waxed lyrical about how down bags are warmer for weight, more compressible and have double the life span of their synthetic cousins. You may even have wondered why they bothered to stock any synthetics at all. Advances in fabrics and insulation fills have significantly reduced many of the performance differences. In fact, there is very little difference between down and synthetic bags in the ultra-light categories. In some cases, synthetics can be lighter as the insulation is held together in a mat as opposed to the looseness of down plumules.

What's inside

Synthetic fills are like thin ceiling batts or blankets; the weave of the fibres and in some cases the fibres themselves trap the air. Similar to any insulation system, trapped air is the key to protecting yourself from the cold. To increase loft and warmth, many fills are constructed of crimped, curled or even hollowed fibres. Many different insulation fills are being produced, Dupont being one of the better-known manufacturers. Some fills are designed for the loft required in thin, light bags, other fills perform better in thicker bags. Reflective materials such as Reflectatherm and Thermaspac also increase the insulation value of a bag. It's best to consult Web sites, catalogues and sales staff for more complex, technical details.

The lower price tags are an obvious attraction but it's the ability to stay relatively warm when wet that enables synthetics to outperform down. Add water to a down bag and the result is a cold, sodden mess that can take days to dry. Synthetic fibres absorb very little water and their woven structure allows the bag to maintain some loft to keep you warm while camped in a pond. Sleeping-bags can also become quite a haven for microflora and microfauna; subtle aromas indicate their presence. Synthetic bags are very easy to wash and fast to dry, an advantage to both travellers and walkers looking for a more acceptable standard of hygiene.

Another consideration might be the low allergenic nature of synthetics; down can trigger skin rashes or respiratory problems in very sensitive people. Environmentally,



She's cold and wet and, no doubt, dreaming of a warm, dry sleeping-bag.
Iain Groves

it's a complex question whether petrochemical-derived synthetic fills are more benign than down farming. Your love of ducks might also be the deciding factor.

Best suited for

Metabolism, body size and preferred sleeping-temperature can vary markedly amongst individuals. One person's bushwalking bag can be a sweaty sauna to another, so an understanding of your sleep temperature comfort zone is essential before selecting a bag. Manufacturers' seasonal, temperature or usage ratings should be considered as a rough guide only; there is no real industry standard for classifying sleeping-bag warmth. The seasonal ratings given here are fairly simplistic. A two-season bag is suitable for summer use, hostel travelling or ultra-light walking. Three-season bags are multipurpose,

suitable for many bushwalkers and for summer, autumn and spring. Winter usage above and below the snowline is the domain of a bulkier four-season bag. Extended use above the snowline may require a thicker, more insulated bag, sometimes called a four-season plus or 'snow' bag.

Shape

The most versatile shapes are the rectangular or tapered rectangular bags. They are roomy and can be unzipped into a blanket to allow comfortable sleeping across a wide range of temperatures. You can also join them together if you are lucky enough to have a compliant partner. The sarcophagus style mummy-bags are much more conforming to body shape and warmer for weight. The down side is that they are much more restrictive and less adaptable to warmer

Synthetic sleeping-bags

		Best suited for	Shape #	Total weight, kilograms	Fill *	Internal construction	Compressed size, centimeters	Surveyor's choice	Comments	Avg price, \$
Aurora Australia										
		Blaze	2 season	tr	1.00	Thinsulate	Single-layer, loose-lined outer, quilted inner	16x13	•••½	Light and compact
		Mt Carlo Hiker	3 season	r	1.40	Quallofil 7	As above	18x15	•••½	All purpose
		Sandman Hike	4 season	r	1.90	As above	Double-layer, offset quilted	30x20	•••½	Warm but still compact
Domex New Zealand www.domex.co.nz										
		Packlite	2 season	tr	1.20	200 gsm Quallofil 7	Single-layer, quilted outer, loose-lined inner	25x19	•••	Compression sack
		Bushmate	3 season	tr	1.85	200 gsm Spiroloft	Double-layer, offset quilted	25x20	•••	King-size available
		Black Ice	4 season	tr	1.85	200 gsm Quallofil 7	As above	31x24	•••	Compression sack
Fairydown China www.fairydown.co.nz										
		Lightning Lite	2 season	r	0.90	100 gsm Thermolite Extra	Single-layer, quilted outer, loose-lined inner	25x17	•••	Very compact, compression sack
		Grampian	3 season	r	1.30	150 gsm Thermolite Extra	Double-layer, offset quilted	32x23	•••	Compression sack
		Adventurer	3 season	m	1.20	100 gsm X-static (top), 150 gsm Hollowcore polyester (bottom)	Double-layer top, offset quilted, single-layer base	34x22	•••½	Neck muf, draught tube, compression sack
Kathmandu China www.kathmandu.com.au										
		Delta	2 season	m	1.10	125 gsm Thermolite Plus	Single-layer, loose-lined outer, quilted inner	22x16	•••	XL available
		Wayfarer	2 season	tr	1.16	As above	As above	25x17	•••	As above
		Globe	2 season	tr	1.80	150 gsm Quallofil 7 (top), 125 gsm (bottom)	Double-layer top, offset quilted, single-layer base	27x23	•••½	As above
Mountain Designs China www.mountaindesigns.com										
		Wanderer 200	3 season	r	1.60	Hollowcore polyester	Double-layer, offset quilted	18x39	•••	Compression sack
		Kashgar 150	2 season	tr	0.98	75 gsm Microthermic	As above	23x17	•••	Foot box, compression sack
		Poincenot	4 season	m	1.70	140 gsm Polarguard 3D	Shingle top and bottom	24x36	•••	As above
Mountain Equipment UK China www.mountain-equipment.co.uk										
		Sleepwalker Ultralight 1	2 season	m	0.85	Polarloft	Single-layer, quilted outer, loose-lined inner	28x18	•••	Elastised stitching for comfort
		Sleepwalker I 1	3 season	m	1.30	As above	Shingle top, single-layer bottom	33x20	•••	As above
		Sleepwalker II 1	3-4 season	m	1.40	As above	Shingle top and bottom	35x20	•••	As above
Paddy Pallin New Zealand www.paddypallin.com.au										
		Tibberoo	2 season	r	1.35	200 gsm Quallofil 7	Single-layer, loose-lined outer, quilted inner	35x15	•••	Compression sack
		Tianjara	3 season	r	1.80	150 gsm Quallofil 7	Double-layer, quilted outer, loose-lined inner	35x19	•••	As above
		Tibrogargan	4 season	r	2.00	200 gsm Quallofil 7	As above	35x22	•••	As above
Roman China www.roman.com.au										
		Palm III	2 season	tr	0.70	Insulif Thermo	Single-layer, loose-lined outer, quilted inner	25x12	•••	Thermospace reflective material on inside. Very compact
		Ultra-Lite Trek Advance	2 season	tr	1.00	Thermolite Plus	As above	32x15	•••½	As above

Synthetic sleeping-bags continued

		Best suited for	Shape #	Total weight, kilograms	Fill *	Internal construction	Compressed size	Surveyor's choice	Comments	Approx. price, \$
Snowgum China www.snowgum.com.au										
◀ Micro Traveller	2 season	m	0.65	75 gsm Thermofil	Single-layer, loose-lined outer, quilted inner	11x20	***	Very compact travel bag, half zip	99	
Sturt	3 season	r	1.45	150 gsm Qualifill 7	Double-layer top, offset quilted, single-layer base	20x30	***	Anti-slip band under hip and shoulder	159	
Traveller 900	2 season	r	0.95	100 gsm Microloft	As above	13x28	***	Pillow pocket and security pocket	159	
Snugpak UK www.snugpak.com										
◀ Sofie Merlin 3	2 season	m	0.75	Sofie	Single-layer, loose-lined	20x14	**	Breathable Pertex lining and Reflectatherm heat barrier **	320	
Sofie Kestrel 6	3 season	m	1.10	Sofie	As above	25x14	**½	Breathable Pertex lining **	360	
Sofie Hawk 9	3-4 season	m	1.40	Sofie	As above	28x22	**	As above	425	
Vango China www.vango.co.uk										
Voyager 300 Lite	3 season	m	1.50	Insulite-Micro	Double-layer top, offset quilted, single-layer base	28x17	***	Compression sack	150	
Ultralite 1100	3 season	m	1.60	As above	As above	28x19	***	Insulated zip baffles, compression sack	240	
◀ Predator 400 1	4 season	m	2.10	150 gsm Thermofill Extra (top) and 100 gsm Micro (bottom)	As above	34x24	***	3D construction, anti-snag zip baffle, compression sack	310	

Shape: m mummy, r rectangular, tr tapered rectangular
referee The country listed after the manufacturer/brand name is the country in which the products are made

* Fill: gsm grams/square metre ● poor ●● average ●●● good ●●●● excellent **Pertex is a type of nylon 1] not seen by

Buy right

- Comfort is the key to a good night's sleep. Get inside the bag, see whether it's restrictive around the shoulders, head or feet. Is it suffocating or claustrophobic to zip up the bag and pull in all the draw-cords? Some bags come in extra wide, extra long or women's fit to accommodate a range of body sizes.
- Know your body. Are you a cold or a hot sleeper? It's a hard question for some; think about what you sleep in at home. Consider a warmer, thicker bag or even go up a season rating if you feel the chill.
- Look at the features. Draught-tube-covered zippers, neck collars and contoured hoods can add significantly to warmth.
- Get a silk inner sheet. It will add a little more warmth, reduce the need to wash the bag as frequently and provide a sleeping solution for hot nights. Warmth can also be added through the use of clothing (thermals and fleece) or bivvy-bags. Sometimes just a beanie and socks will increase your comfort level.
- Use a good-quality sleeping-mat to insulate you from the ground and to protect the bag.
- Is the bag easily compressible to get back into the stuff sack? It may be worth investing in a good compression sack if the supplied one is inadequate or non-existent.

weather since most don't open up like the rectangular styles.

Total weight

The warmer you want a bag to be, the more fill it must contain and therefore the heavier it must be. The weights shown are provided by the manufacturer and are 'ready to go', including stuff sacks. Weights can vary due to manufacturing tolerances and mid-season changes in materials so check with scales if gram saving is your priority.

Fill

This refers to the brand type and weight of the fill in grams a square metre (gsm). In general, the higher the gsm, the warmer and bulkier the bag will be. Higher quality fills are warmer, more compressible and durable during the life of the bag.

Internal construction

In the early days of synthetic bags, it was easy to write them off as just doonas with a zip. However, today the story is much different. Stitch lines, where the insulation layer is sewn to the outer or inner shell fabric, tend to create cold spots. In the endless search for lighter and warmer bags, construction methods have become a little more cunning. Profiling or loose lining means that one side of the fill layer is not sewn to the outer fabric (though usually sewn to the inner). It's commonly used in lightweight two-three season bags. Offset quilting is

where two layers of insulation are used, one sewn to the outer fabric, the other sewn to the inner. Shingle construction is a bit like slant-wall construction in a down bag and often used in four-season bags. Layers of fill are overlapped like shingles on a roof and are very effective at reducing cold spots.

Compressed size

Some synthetics bags are quite bulky so a good compression sack is a necessity. Look for one with an extendable throat; it makes packing so much easier. Compression dimensions are provided by the manufacturer and are a guide only; considerable squashing or punching the bag during packing may improve the figures or lead to exasperation.

Surveyor's choice

You usually get what you pay for. The more expensive bags often use more advanced materials and higher production standards. If your outdoors needs are less stringent and the budget smaller, many of the cheaper bags will certainly get you by. The most important quality in a bag is whether it's comfortable to sleep in so try them on in the shop. The bullet ratings have been calculated by looking at factors such as quality of materials, price, bulkiness and suitability for the average weekend bushwalker. 

Soft Edwors often muses on the paradox of procuring lightweight camping equipment so he can carry the heaviest Telemark gear into the snow. At present he works in the Victorian Alps on bushfire recovery and regeneration.

This survey was refereed by Jim Graham.

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- **The Geko 101** is the perfect low-cost device for navigational novices. Featuring a 250-waypoint storage capacity with graphic identification to mark campsites parking spots and specific locations.

The Geko 201 This powerful device has the basic functions of the Geko 101 with an added user-configurable trip computer with auto recording of electronic 'breadcrumb trails'. The Geko 201 is also packed with several Garmin-proprietary games that transform the great outdoors into a virtual board game.

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To Stager Sport

I thought you may be interested in my assessment of my new Meindl boots. I have worn the boots extensively in the Australian bush and in Canada and have never owned more comfortable footwear. After a 10 day winter trek up to the sub-polar to witness the polar bear migration and spent about 5 hours each day cut out hiking on the arctic tundra, often in snow and ice up to my knees.

I must admit to being a little cynical about the insulating properties of the Makalu and hired a set of heavy felt lined boots. I wore them once. The remainder of the time I wore the Makalu with a light wicking sock under a pair of thermal socks and never suffered from cold feet. Average temperatures were -25 degrees C and the coldest day was -45. My Makalu stayed warm and dry.

Am I impressed? You better believe it. You have a great product.

Best Regards
Russ Gately

Polar Bear photos by Russ Gately

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Pure Fabrication

W L Gore & Associates is releasing a new range of **fabrics** this winter. The **WindStopper Soft Shell** is claimed to be a single layer that is totally windproof, highly breathable and durably water resistant, and can be used in individual items of clothing that combine insulating and shell layers for a wide range of activities and conditions.

Ultra Lite Gore-Tex is a softer version of the well-known Paclite fabric, and is designed for lightweight adventure travel. It is easier on the skin than most chin-chafing jacket fabrics and may become a favoured wiping spot for that runny nose! Phone 1800 226 703.

Do it Ray's way!

GoLite, a US company, makes gear that is about as light as you can get. Ray Jardine—the man who invented Wild Country Friends—was a designer



GoLite Trek rucksack.

of the GoLite range, so now you can do it Ray's way! According to GoLite's figures, a 70-litre pack weighs 1100 grams and a three/four season sleeping bag weighs less than 800 grams. GoLite is distributed in Australia by **Sea to Summit**, phone 1800 787 677.

Heroes and hardware

According to the hyperbole, the new **Sierra Designs tent** is the strongest on the market. The **Hercules AST** was apparently still standing when the wind tunnel had to be turned off to prevent damage to the surrounding laboratory! This strength is claimed to be due to pole technology, including a new system of poles on its corners. It is priced at a heroic \$949 and is distributed by **Outdoor Agencies**, phone (02) 9438 2266.

Mountain Hardware also has a new tent with the plainer name **PCT 2**.

Sierra Designs
Hercules
AST tent.



Light Horse Brigade

There is yet another range in the **Petzl** stable, the **MYO Headlamps**. There are five models, all of which come with xenon halogen bulbs claimed to have a maximum range of 100 metres. **MYO** is the base model, while **MYO 3** and **MYO 5** have separate reflector units containing LEDs for more efficient proximity lighting. The **MYO 3** has three LEDs, while (you guessed it!) the **MYO 5** has five and also allows a choice between three brightness settings. There are also models with battery packs that are worn on the belt. All models run on four AA batteries and have a locking switch, tilt feature and a beam that can be focused. Phone **Spelean**, 1800 634 853. RRP for the **MYO** headlamps ranges from \$75-\$159.



Petzl MYO 5
headlamp.

It is said to be a well-ventilated, two-person tent weighing only 1.87 kilograms. Contact **Snowgum**, phone 1800 811 312. RRP \$379, a one-person version is available for \$299.

layers, down jackets and vests, warmth- and base layers. The range looks good in the brochure, using technical fabrics and designs, and with the all-important colour options ranging from 'Molten' to 'Storm'.

Men's and women's designs are available. See www.zonenz.com for more information.

A hat of the inedible variety

Kavu's new **hat**, the **Fisherman's Chilliba**, looks like a high-tech version of the straw hats worn in the rice fields of China. It has a stainless steel ring in the brim that allows it to be twisted into a ball—similar to the beach shelters with which people struggle Australia-wide but easier to manage. It is made from Taslan nylon, is reversible and has a chin strap to keep it in place. Phone **ZSports**, (07) 3286 1055. RRP \$45.

Kavu Fisherman's Chilliba
hat.



The zone of fairies

Fairydown has released **Zone**, a new range of **clothing** that replaces its previous apparel range. The collection includes shell

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Socks and jocks

Two new brands of **socks** are on the market, each claimed to be a technical advance in footwear. According to US company **Wigwam Mills**, its **INgenius** socks are revolutionary as they knit an inner and outer sock together. Apparently the inner is made from Nobel prize award-winning fibre—smarter than your average pair of socks! They are available from **Outdoor Agencies** in **Hiker** and **Boot** models, RRP \$38 and \$45, respectively.

trix

Keeping warm A grab-bag of ideas to supplement your sleeping-bag by Mark Walters

Having the best four-season bag is not the only way to keep warm at night during the colder months. Here are a few ideas worth considering if your bag is not enough on its own.

- Share a tent with as many other people as is practical.
- Use two mattresses or sleep on excess clothing to insulate yourself from the cold ground. (Self-inflating mattresses are not always the best as they are more prone to damage that can render them much less effective.)
- A thin (2 mm) layer of closed-cell foam that covers the entire floor of your tent helps to keep out the cold. This is available from outdoors shops.
- Have a hot drink before going to bed.
- Make sure you don't skip dinner.
- Do not stay outside too long after dinner. On a cold night your body temperature may slowly decrease.
- While you are outside make sure that you keep warm; for snow-camping in Australia I recommend five layers plus an outer shell.
- Set up your tent out of the wind.
- Wear thermals to bed. Avoid wearing too many layers in your sleeping-bag as it can compromise the loft (the idea of a sleeping-bag is partly to trap warm air around your body).
- A beanie is also very useful.
- Bivy-bags can be used inside a tent.
- A candle lantern can help to take the chill out of the tent.
- Older sleeping-bags can effectively be rejuvenated by equipment repair businesses (such as **Venus Repair Workshop** in Sydney and **Remote Equipment Repairs** in Melbourne).
- A hot water-bottle can be improvised by filling a water-bottle with hot water and placing it in a sock. Such bottles are most effective when placed on an artery either between your legs or under your arms.

Wild welcomes readers' contributions to this section; payment is at our standard rate. Send them to the address at the end of this department.

Another sock which intends to boost the IQ of your feet, **SmartWool** claims to use only 100 per cent New Zealand merino wool next to your skin. This apparently makes the socks more cushioning, and the pair we tried supported this claim—no blisters. They come in models designed for everything from cross-country skiing to hunting. SmartWool socks are available from **Future Sport**, phone (02) 4365 1838. RRP ranges from \$39 to \$49.

oversleep or burn your bacon. Phone **Sheldon & Hammond**, 1800 209 999. RRP \$110. **Pacific Cutlery** has a range of **knives** without the bells and corkscrews. More than 35 styles of knives are available, predominantly with folding

Knick-Knacks

* The new range of **Salewa day packs** has arrived in the country. Models include **Adrenaline**, **Flexx**, **Distance** and the **Summit** series. Available from **Intertrek** shops. Prices range from \$90 to \$140.



One Planet Exact Fit rucksack harness.

* **One Planet** has released its 2003-04 **rucksack** range, with the new Exact Fit harness system on all large models. This comes in both standard and women's fittings, and it is claimed that the harness system allows adjustments to be made easily whilst wearing the pack. Phone **Adventure One**, (03) 9372 2555. Prices range from \$289 for the **Mungo**.

* The new **Victorinox Voyager pen-knife** not only has a corkscrew and a toothpick, it also has a digital clock! The alarm and timer will ensure that you don't



Pacific Cutlery Adventurer folding knife.

blades. The **Adventurer** is claimed to have a locking blade and good grip—RRP \$55. Telephone **Zen Imports**, 1800 064 200.

* **E3** is a new range of **footwear** designed for more lightweight activities. They look good in the brochure although more



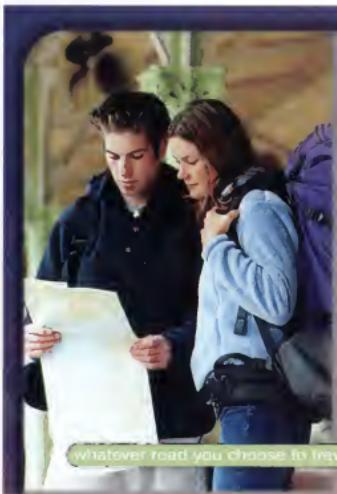
E3 Beatnik walking shoe.

urban cool than country tough! They come in a range of models including the **Beatnik**. Telephone **Velo-Vita**, (02) 9695 7744. RRP from \$165.

* The **Garmin Geko** is claimed to be the next advance in the high-tech wizardry of the **GPS**. Two models are available, the **101** and **201**, each claimed to weigh only 88 grams with batteries. The **201** has a 10 000 point track-log memory and four built-in games for those quiet moments! Phone **GME**, (02) 9844 6666. RRP \$285 (101), \$349 (201).

* **Hennessy Hammocks** are claimed to be the new super shelters—waterproof, lightweight, comfortable, easy to put up and affordable. The endorsements are glowing and they are very light, from a claimed 440 grams. The **Cocoon** weighs 1130 grams and is distributed by **Intertrek**. RRP \$149. ☺

New and innovative products of relevance to the rucksack sports (on loan to *Wild* and/or information about them, including high-resolution digital photos on CD, not by email or colour slides, are welcome for possible review in this department. Written items should be typed, include recommended retail prices and preferably not exceed 200 words. Send them to *Wild*, PO Box 145, Prahran, Vic 3181 or contact us by email: *wild@wild.com.au*



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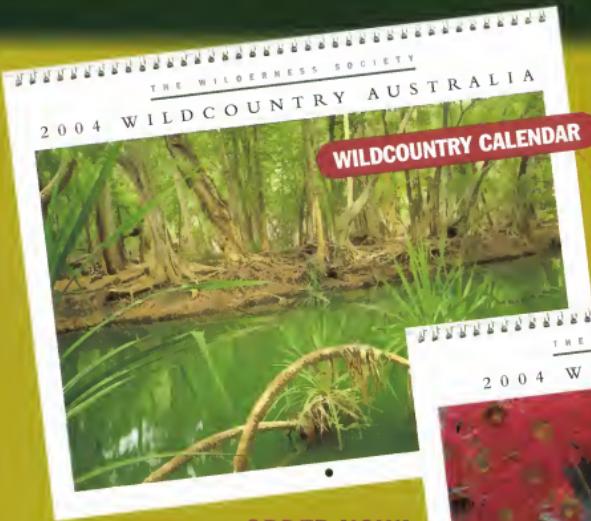
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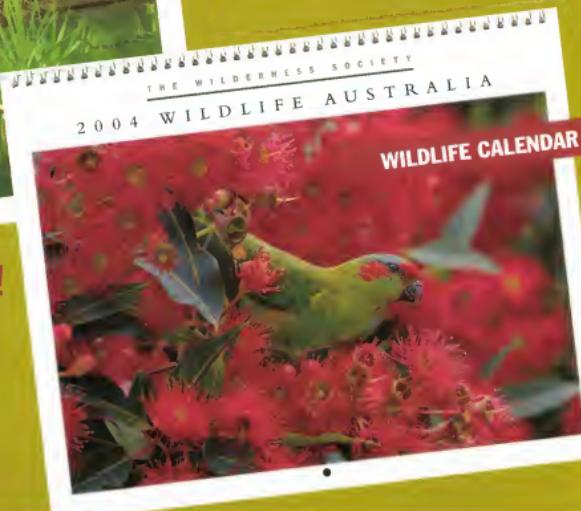
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The Gordon Splits and a *future perfect*

Before 1965 the Gordon River in South-west Tasmania was truly wild. With a catchment area covering over 7000 square kilometres, this wine-dark river had flowed in massive volumes to the sea for millennia. Amazingly, the ancient river ran against the grain of the landscape through a series of deep cracks or 'splits' in the quartzite spine of the Nicholls Range. The First Split, the most dramatic of the three, consists of two basins connected by three narrow corridors. In the past the entire Gordon River flowed through here in three metre wide cracks, carrying more water annually than any other river in Australia. The natural flood watermark was more than 30 metres above summer level, depositing trees in high caves as time capsules. In the river's vast estuary it is hard to comprehend the fury of a great body of water swirling through house-sized boulders into foaming whirlpools and narrow slits.

First proof of human occupation of the Gordon River area came forward in January 1981. Archaeologist Dr Rhys Jones found stone artefacts, crude cutting tools that possibly predate the rainforest. Go back some 10 000 years in time. The South-west landscape was vastly different, a countryside of open plains with alpine grasslands grazed by prehistoric mammals—the giant emu, the giant titan and short-faced browsing kangaroo. The Gordon River and its tributaries would have provided convenient access from the coast to the hinterland for Aboriginal bands.

Postwar migrant Olegas Truchanas, inspired by a description of the Splits in a newspaper, designed a dismountable kayak and planned an epic three-week solo journey to explore the Gordon for himself. In 1958, on his second attempt, he became the first person to paddle down the Gordon River from the original Lake Pedder to the sea. The most exhausting section was the Splits, where passage through the channels and waterfalls was impossible. Truchanas had no alternative but to use the almost impenetrable scrub that clung to the precipices he traversed, portaging his dismountable canoe and all his gear.

A decade later desperate efforts were made to save the original Lake Pedder from inundation. The campaign raged for seven years, from 1967 to 1973. The planned damming of the Gordon River by the same Middle Gordon Hydro-Electric Development Scheme received relatively little objection as attention was focused on the uniquely beautiful alpine lake with its vast beach of white quartzite sand.

When the flooding of the lake seemed all but inevitable, one man at least felt the urgency of the threat to the Gordon River from a looming Lower Gordon Power Development Scheme. In an effort to capture again the incomparable splendour of the Splits, Truchanas set out on the exhausting journey that cost him his life. He perished in the



Tasmania's unique Gordon Splits; the inspiration for a future perfect?
Helen Gee collection

Gordon Gorge in the river he tried so desperately to save.

Faced with mounting opposition to a Gordon-below-Franklin dam and power scheme, the government switched back and forth three times between this and a Gordon-above-Olga option, adopted by the House of Assembly then rejected by the Legislative Council (November 1980). It paved the way for the historic 'No Dams Write-in' Referendum of December 1981 when a massive one-third of the Tasmanian electorate refused to vote for either dam. Those intervening 12

months were crucial to the mounting Franklin campaign and blockade preparations, and in that sense the Splits played a pivotal role in saving the Franklin River.

The tale of the Franklin River is now legendary: a David and Goliath story of the people succeeding, seemingly against all odds, in stopping the Gordon Power Development Stage Two, preventing the series of dams which would have drowned the wild gorges of the Gordon, Denison and Franklin as well as the Jane and Olga Rivers. Today the entire catchment of the Gordon River downstream

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Not a pretty site; Gordon River dam, c 1976. Gee

from the Gordon Power Scheme is within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area! However, a new and larger threat to the Splits has emerged: Basslink.

Hydro Tasmania has already been authorised to exercise statutory powers within the TWWA. This effectively sanctions present and future altered flow regimes and consequent impacts on river-bank stability and riparian habitat. Although the Splits are, collectively, a unique natural World Heritage site, they are under attack once again.

Basslink is a \$500 million energy project to link the Tasmanian and Australian mainland power systems by a high-voltage cable under Bass Strait. The Tasmanian Government says that Basslink is good for Tasmania—it will be used to justify burning Tasmania's ancient forests in furnaces and flooding our wild rivers, including the Gordon, twice daily to satisfy Melbourne's peak electricity demand!

It is fundamental to a *future perfect* that clean, green energy be generated close to the demand centres. Wasteful transmission losses and collateral environmental impacts

can be kept to a minimum by localising wind farms.

In 2001 the World Commission on Dams pronounced the end of large-scale hydro power, the end of the big-dam era. The economics of big dams have proven not to be viable and efforts to mitigate consequent environmental damage have not succeeded.

Against this background, the Gordon Splits, among Australia's most spectacular river chasms, would be scoured twice daily when Melbournians turn on their toasters and air-conditioners.

Tasmania has a gift for the world—it's natural capital—which could be worth more than we have ever dreamed. Energy efficiency and more intelligent, localised use of our natural resources—wouldn't that be a better way to go?

Helen Gee

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Keep up to date on Basslink developments by visiting www.greens.org.au/bobbrown

Biodiversity decline

An audit commissioned by the Federal Government has found that Australia's biodiversity is significantly declining, reported the *Age* on 23 April. The report found that landscapes, ecosystems and species are being damaged, leaving over 1500 native plant and animal species threatened with extinction. Areas that have been previously considered untouched have declining bird and mammal populations and almost 2900 ecosystems are threatened.

Different areas of Australia face varying impacts but land clearing, feral animals and overgrazing are the key threats to biodiversity. Much of the land clearing damage was done long ago. In Victoria's west more than 95 per cent of native vegetation has been cleared,

leaving 15 per cent of native vegetation types extinct and 78 per cent threatened. Riverbank vegetation throughout Australia is also suffering, with only 28 per cent of these zones judged to be in good condition.

The news is not all bad. According to the report a modest investment in changing fire regimes and stock levels would benefit almost a third of areas, particularly in northern Australia.

The report highlighted shortcomings in Australia's conservation parks after it was found that only two-thirds of ecosystem types are protected in reserves at present. This has led to calls for a more comprehensive system of parks and an end to land clearing throughout Australia to prevent a new wave of extinctions.

Dry mouths close, again

Two of Australia's most famous rivers, the Murray and the Snowy, are facing further battles to stop their mouths closing, as reported in the *Age* on 23 April. The two million dollars spent last year dredging the mouth of the Murray River, South Australia, was not expected to prevent it from closing by May. The Murray's short-term problem is drought, but the bigger problem is the reduced flow in the river, with three-quarters of the flow used for irrigation and urban use.

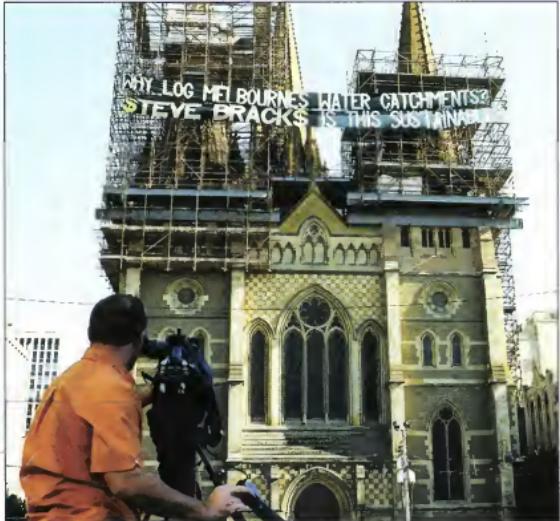
The South Australian Government said it would keep dredging as the river mouth would not open again naturally for years. The open mouth not only allows the passage of fish and boats, but also ensures the survival of the important Coorong wetlands. The Murray Darling Basin Commission is looking at ways to restore water flow in the long term. SA favours the biggest of three options, with 1500 gigalitres returned to the river.

The mouth of the Snowy River in Mario, Victoria, was opened in April by earth-moving machines. According to Dennis Matthews, the chief ranger for Parks Victoria in East Gippsland, the one-in-ten-year closure was due to the drought. He said that the blockage had nothing to do with the effects of dams or reduced water flow, and that the closure was inevitable given the conditions.

Wood-chips

- The Victorian Government will review its guidelines for **logging near rainforests** after losing a court case against an anti-logging protester, reported the *Age* on 1 February. Hayley Shields was involved in a logging protest in the Otways in 2001 which led to her arrest for obstructing a lawful logging operation. In January, Shields won her appeal by arguing that it was not a lawful operation as the Code of Forest Practices had been misinterpreted allowing logging too close to protected rainforest. Similar charges were subsequently dropped against 13 other protesters. Environmentalists believe there will be wide repercussions from the decision and hope that by proving specific logging operations are illegal it will become harder for protesters to be charged.
- The Tasmanian National Parks Association claims the 'serial intrusion of Tassie's National Parks' is under way. Campaign Officer Helen Gee reports that, in addition to the proposed development for the shores of Lake St Clair reported in *Wild* no 88, a proposal for **Planters Beach** (near Cockle Creek) in the South-west National Park has been given approval after a boundary change, and that **Maria Island** is the next target in developers' sights. For further information see www.tnpa.asn.au There has been an

When Church and State meet



Appeal to a higher authority? St Pauls Cathedral, Melbourne.
(Not described in text.) Eli Greig

update on the report about the proposed Lake St Clair development. The number of bedrooms has been reduced from 60 to 40, and the planned 100-person boat will operate from a pontoon, not a jetty.

- As reported previously, **The Wilderness Society** has implemented **WildCountry**, an Australia-wide programme that intends not only to protect wild places and wildlife, but also to help to define the path towards restoration. One of the key projects in the programme, recently announced, is **Gondwana Link** which aims to establish a protected corridor of ecosystems in Western Australia from Margaret River to Kalgoorlie and beyond. For more information, phone 1800 030 641 or look at its Web site, www.wilderness.org.au

- On 23 April the *Age* reported that **Chris Darwin**, the great-great-grandson of the famous British naturalist Charles Darwin, has begun to spend his inheritance on saving species from extinction. He has recently finished a year of voluntary work with the Australian Bush Heritage Fund and donated \$300 000 towards its purchase of a 68 600 hectare property in Western Australia. **Charles Darwin Reserve** is the 15th reserve purchased by the ABHF and will help to preserve plant species.

- Parks Victoria has launched a new telephone service to allow people to **report**

suspicious or **destructive behaviour in the bush**. The 'Bush Telegraph' service is available by calling 13 28 74 for the cost of a local call. Further information is available by phoning 13 19 63 or from www.parkweb.vic.gov.au

Be alert but not alarmed..

- The **Bogong Education Centre** in Bogong Village, Victoria, is running education sessions about the **recent fires** on the natural environment in the **Alps**. The half-day sessions will run from April to June 2003 with further dates likely. Phone (03) 5754 1732 or email bogong.outdoor.ec@edumail.vic.gov.au for more information.
- Rampant tourism development in Halls Gap, the town abutting Victoria's **Grampians** National Park, has long been of concern to those who see the benefit of maintaining the unique natural features of the region. Recently an unusually large 60 hectare native-forest block on the southern outskirts of the town came on the market but was reportedly withdrawn from sale by the owner after the local shire council indicated that it required the land to be developed as an '**international tourist resort**'.

Readers' contributions to this department, including high-resolution digital photos (on CD, not by email) or colour slides, are welcome. Items of less than 200 words are more likely to be published. Send them to **Wild**, PO Box 415, Prahran, Vic 3181 or email wild@wild.com.au



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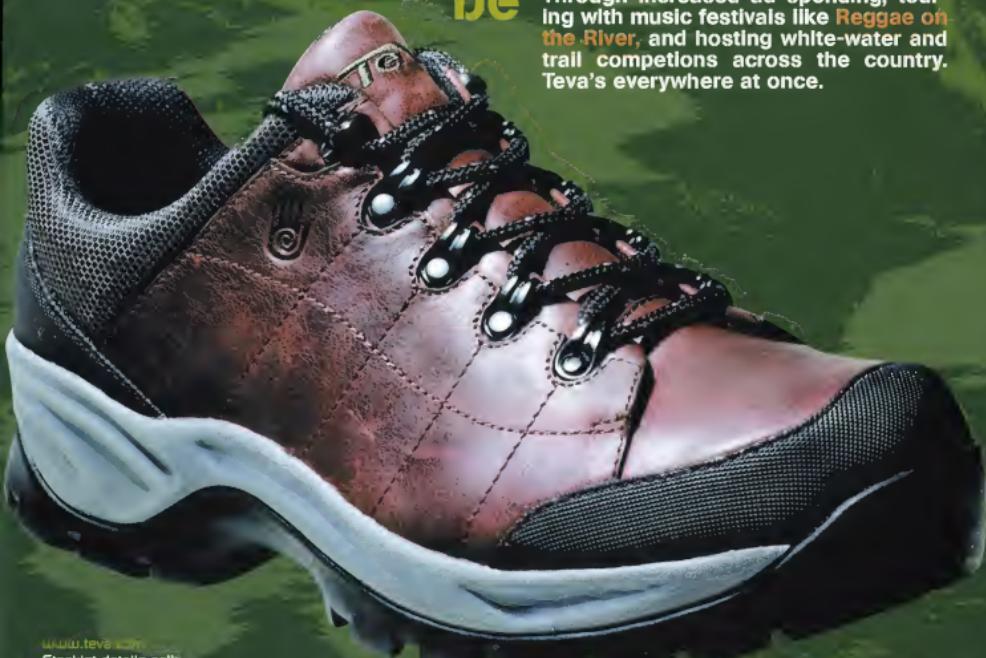
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Exploring the Sydney Region

by Leonard Cronin and others (Enviro-book, 2002, RRP \$30).

This is a great little guide. Visitors to the city will find a lot in it that is of value, but I am sure that long-term residents will also find many new ideas for places to visit and walks



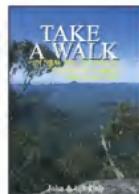
to complete. It describes many walks along the foreshores and beaches as well as in parks and National Parks, cycling tours and places of interest. Abundantly illustrated with photos and maps.

David Noble

Take a Walk in New South Wales National Parks: South Eastern Zone

by John & Lyn Daly (Take a Walk Publications, 2002, RRP \$24.95).

Small in size but with more than 300 pages jam packed with walks information on some of New South Wales's best National Parks, this book is of great value. It covers the coast



south of Sydney down to the Victorian border and includes parks in the adjacent ranges. Few bushwalkers will be familiar with all this guide has to offer. A lot of work has gone into compiling it—for the authors it has been a labour of love. Strongly recommended for any bushwalker's library. 

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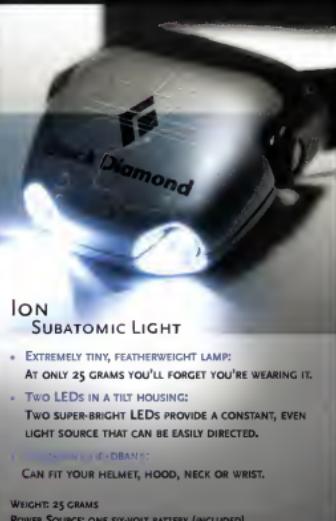


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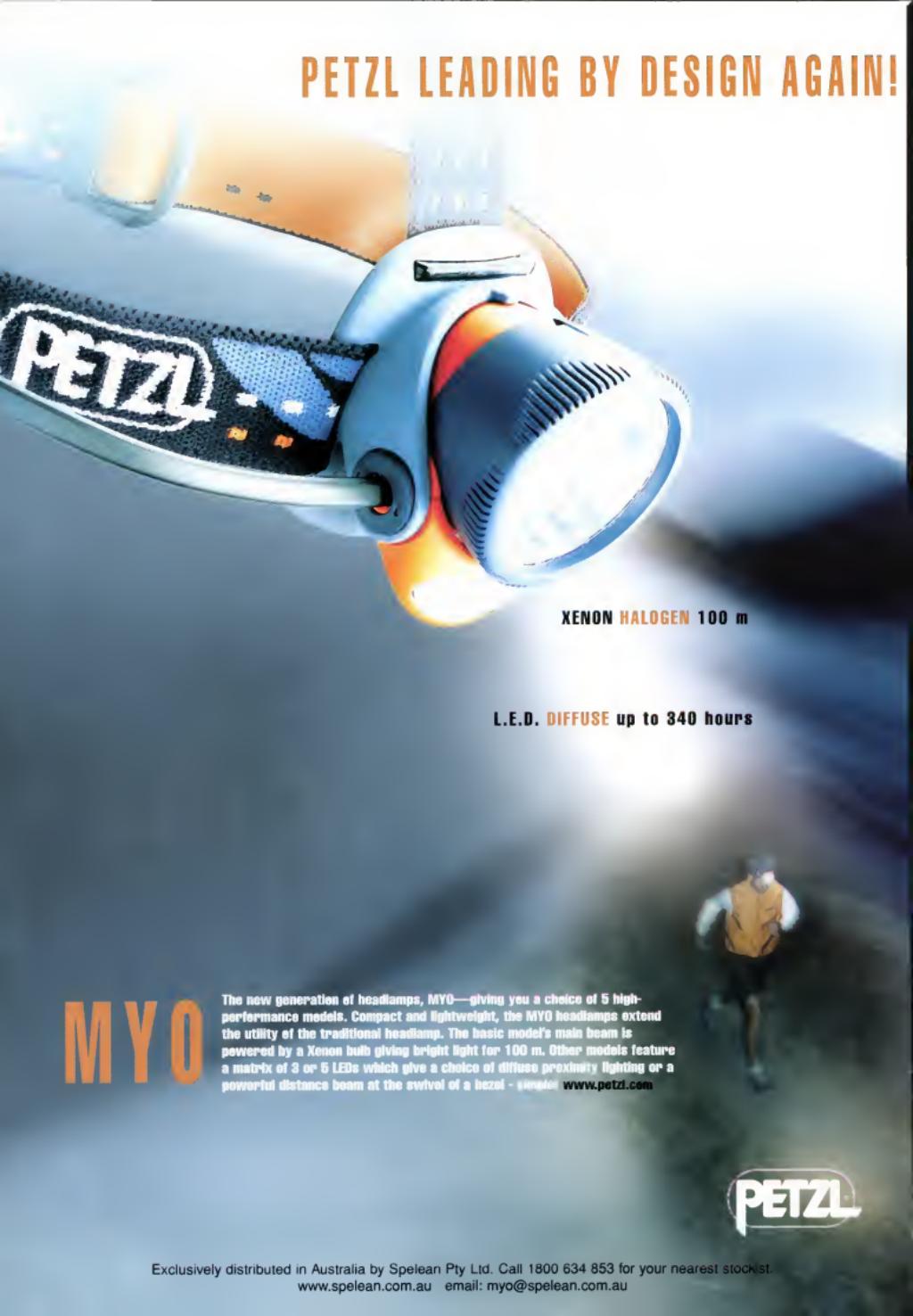
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